



EU-SAARC Think Tank Summit

"Advancing EU-SAARC Cooperation" 20-21 January, 2021

The two regional blocks, EU and SAARC, have been cooperating on multiple fronts. For instance, the EU is South Asia's largest trading partner as well as a major development and aid partner. The EU is also an observer within the SAARC. South Asia is home to over one-fifth of the world's population – and rapidly becoming one of the pivotal regions in the globe, with growing economic and strategic significance.

As Such, the "EU-SAARC Think Tank Summit 2021" to be jointly hosted on January 2021by the Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs (AIDIA), a Kathmandu-based foreign policy think-tank, and South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF), a Brussels-based think tank, will discuss the multiple challenges in inter-regional cooperation between the EU and South Asia. At this summit both policy shapers and makers from political circles, government agents, representatives of think-tanks and academia, civil society, business, and media from the two regions will come together in a virtual platform to discuss a wide range of subjects related to inter-regional ties.

The summit will focus primarily on bolstering networks and collaboration between think-tanks from the two regions; advancing inter-regional economic cooperation; exploring regional strategies of both the EU in South Asia; evaluating contemporary challenges in regional integration; examining the role of EU in promoting development and democracy in South Asia; and responding efficiently to common, non-traditional security threats.

AGENDA

DAY 1

JANUARY 20, 2020 - WEDNESDAY

10:00-11:30 CET/ 14:30-16:00 IST

Opening Plenary: Building Cooperation between European and South Asian Think Tanks

Opening Plenary Session Brief

Constructive cooperation and dialogue amidst European and South Asian think tanks is imperative for deepening cooperation between two regional blocs. This session will accentuate the practical aspects of this cooperation, including exploring collaborative prospects in research and publications, promoting regular dialogues, and sharing innovative ideas and best practices. Our goal is of course to develop the best policy recommendations so as to deal with both emerging issues and daunting challenges affecting relations between the EU and South Asia. The session will also focus on how think tanks from both regions generate innovative ideas and cope with funding issues.

Welcome Remarks:

Mr. Paulo Casaca, Executive Director, South Asia Democratic Forum & Former Member of the European Parliament

Panelists:

Dr. Werner Fasslabend, President, Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy (AIES), Austria

Dr. Arvida Gupta, Director, Vivekananda International Foundation VIF New Delhi

Dr. Bishnu Raj Upreti, Executive Chairperson, Policy Research Institute (PRI), Nepal

Dr. Malgorzata Bonikowska, President, Center for International Relations (CSM), Poland

Moderator: Mr. Shyam KC, Research and Development Director, AIDIA

13:00-14:30 CET/ 17:30-19:00 IST

Session II: Regional Integration in the EU and South Asia: Contemporary Analysis and the Future Prospects

Plenary Session II Brief

The EU and South Asia differ greatly as concerns regional integration processes, approaches, characteristics and functionalities. In this context, the panel will examine some key questions of our times. For example, how is the rise of nationalism and populism in a post-Brexit scenario affecting EU integration dynamics? What are the underlying impediments for the revitalization of the SAARC process? What are the future prospects and policy options laying before us? What can South Asia learn from the EU's regional integration model?

Panelists:

Professor Harsh V Pant, Kings College London; SADF Advisory Board Member, UK/India

Dr.habil. Christian Wagner, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)/German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Germany

Dr. Manish Thapa, Visiting Research Professor, University of Warsaw

Dr. Masuma Hasan (Chairman), Pakistan Institute of International Affairs (PIIA)

Prof. Dr. Steven Blockmans, Research Director, Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), Belgium

Moderator: Dr. Sreeradha Datta, Centre Head, Neighbourhood Studies, VIF

DAY 2

JANUARY 21, 2020 – THURSDAY

09:00-10:30 CET/ 13:30-15:00 IST

Plenary Session III: Exploring the EU's Regional Strategies in South Asia

Plenary Session III Brief

South Asia is rapidly emerging as a pivotal region in the global arena. The session will explore the EU's core regional interests in South Asia – including maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region and the India-EU Strategic Partnership. Considering emerging global and regional dynamics, the panel will also examine EU's renewed interests and strategies regarding South Asia.

Special Address:

H.E. Ugo Astuto, Ambassador of the European Union to India and Bhutan

Panelists:

Dr. Constantino Xavier, Fellow, The Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP), India

Dr. Mathew Sinu Simon, Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), India

Dr. Garima Mohan, Fellow, German Marshall Fund, Berlin

Ms Stefania Benaglia, Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), Belgium

Moderator: Asst. Prof. Dattesh Prabhu Parulekar, School of International and Area Studies Goa University/Visiting Fellow AIDIA

12:00-13:30 CET/ 16:30-18:00 IST

Closing Plenary Session: Addressing Non-traditional Security Challenges between EU and South-Asia

Closing Plenary Session Brief

Both the EU and South Asia are dealing with various emerging, non-traditional security threats. The panel of experts will underline respective regional challenges and put forward some policy options thought effective. Issues discussed will include water, food and energy security; cooperation in the context of climate change; cooperation as regards natural disasters preparedness and relief; cross-border movements and migration analysis; combating transnational organized crime and terrorism; knowledge-sharing of cyber security; and dealing with public health crisis (COVID-19), inter alia.

Panelists:

Dr. Khan Ahmed Sayeed Murshid, Director General, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS)

Mr. Sabyasachi Dutta, Founder-Director, Asian Confluence, Shillong, India

Dr. Emma Hakala, Senior Research Fellow, Finnish Institute of International Affairs (UPI), Finland

Mr. Sameer Patil, Fellow, Gateway House, India

Dr. Iole Fontana Research Fellow, Department of Political and Social Science, University of Catania

Moderator: Dr Bharti Chhibber, Assistant Professor, University of Delhi, India

Closing Remarks:

Mr. Sunil KC, Founder/CEO, Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs (AIDIA)