

ASSESSMENT OF POSSIBLE BOTTLENECKS OR BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTING THE COMMITMENTS

A major bottleneck or barrier in the implementation of an integrated approach amongst the SAARC countries is a possible “trust deficit” between the countries in the region, given that there are a number of contentious issues between them, which range from territorial conflicts to disputes over the sharing of resources such as water. Further, even 30 years after the creation of SAARC, there is no clear or convincing answer to the basic question as to whether all of these countries in the region are genuinely interested in pursuing the goal of an integrated approach to solving issues – whether it is trade or climate change or any other issue.

Some major bottlenecks in the implementation of ambitious programmes in the region are:

- a. Lack of political or institutional will to take up programmes and policies at a regional level
- b. Lack of a proper institutional or coordination mechanism between various sector agencies in the respective countries leads to a lack of proper implementation and, more importantly, to a lack of a monitoring mechanism
- c. Lack of adequate funding or mobilization of resources, which hinders the implementation of projects
- d. The diverse priorities of each country make it difficult to opt for a set of actions that can be implemented collectively.
- e. The vast diversity that characterizes each country, in terms of topography or culture, also makes it difficult to come up with a joint programme that has common deliverables and objectives.
- f. Perhaps related to the huge “trust deficit” between the countries in the region, there tends to be an apprehension amongst the smaller countries that an integrated South Asia would expose them to domination by India. Similarly, from India’s side, there is a fear that an integrated approach would mean a great financial burden on the country.