February 16, 2012

7th Meeting of Group of Experts on SAFTA

SAARCC CCI demands Liberal SAARCC Visa Policy for Businessmen, substantial reduction in Sensitive list, removal of NTMs for accelerated growth in intra-SAARC Trade

Islamabad (P R)- The SAARCC Chamber of Commerce & Industry demands Liberal SAARCC Visa Policy for Businessmen, substantial reduction in Sensitive list, removal of Para-tariff and Non-Tariff Measures(NTMs) and exhibition of greater political for swift execution of trade facilitation mechanism to ensure accelerated growth in intra-SAARC Trade

Mr. Vikramjit Singh Sahney, President SAARCC CCI while making presentation in the 7th Committee of Experts on SAFTA held on 15th February 2012 in Islamabad demanded for revising SAARC Visa Exemption Stickers Scheme (SVES) for the businessmen, which entitled them to acquire SAARC Sticker for one year instead of one month or three months under the new Policy, which was regarded as detrimental to business promotion in South Asia. The SAARCC CCI maintained its demands for increase in Stickers to 500 for businessmen of each member state in South Asia.

President SAARCC CCI identified 10 basic reasons, hindering the performance of intra-regional Trade in South Asia stating that lack of political will and absence of compatible trade facilitation mechanism, sizeable sensitive list, Para-tariff (PTBs) and Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) and improper infrastructure were the core issues, which need to be dealt on preferential basis. He proposed several measures like substantial reduction of items under sensitive list, removal of NTBs, imperiously implementation of Multimodal Transport Agreement and representation of Private sector in policy making level to improve the intra-regional trade in South Asia. He sought representation of SAARCC CCI at Ministerial and Head of states level.

He was assisted Mr. Tariq Sayeed former President, Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Vice President, Mr. Iqbal Tabish, Secretary General, SAARCC CCI and Mr. Zubair Ahmed Malik, member technical committee of SAARCC CCI on SAFTA.

While responding to the queries of the SAFTA Committee of Experts, Mr. Tariq Sayeed, founder member and former President of SAARCC CCI said that the Private Sector was willing to improve the low level of intra-SAARC Trade provided the Governments in South Asia act as true facilitators and withdraw over-regulations to ensure the free flow of goods and services and enhance mobility of the business people. He outlined the several activities undertaken by SAARCC CCI during last four years and sough more interactive session between SAARCC CCI and the Public Sector representatives under SAARC.
Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik emphasized on the need for improving people-to-people connectivity as a fundamental requirement for improving socio-economic cooperation adding that SAARC CCI was committed to propel the execution of Government decision to promote intra-SAARC Trade.

Muhammad Iqbal Tabish, Secretary General regarding bilateral initiatives as parallel mechanism to SAFTA stating that intra-SAARC Trade of worth $ 16 billion amongst SAARC countries was because of bilateral arrangement while trade under SAFTA Rule of Origin was estimated only $1.4 billion in the year 2011, which provided that the Bilateral Agreements were not supplementing. He proposed adoption of common nomenclature of standards, mutual acceptance of certification, accreditation and harmonization of procedures, improvement in infrastructure to improve intra-regional trade.

Mr. Zubair Ahmed Malik enlightened the officials about SAARC Trade Network Portal and regular representation of SAARC CCI while stating that the organization was an important part of all deliberations and had played an effective role for its improvement.

Mr. Vikramjit Singh Sahney, President SAARC CCI (3rd from right) making presentation in the 7th Committee of Experts on SAFTA held on 15th February 2012 in Islamabad, Mr. Tariq Sayeed-Former President, Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik-Vice President, Mr. Iqbal Tabish-Secretary General, SAARC CCI and Mr. Zubair Ahmed Malik-Member technical committee of SAARC CCI on SAFTA are present at the occasion.

(Muhammad Iqbal Tabish)
Secretary General
SAARC Chamber of Commerce & Industry