**SAARC CCI Press Release**

**Trade Facilitation and MSMEs in South Asia**

SAARC CCI suggests Private Sector led multi-stakeholders approach

Islamabad (P R)- “Issues pertaining to Trade Facilitation (TF) and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) can be addressed through multi-stakeholder approach led by the Private Sector” stated Mr. Iqbal Tabish, Secretary General, SAARC Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SAARC CCI) at the inaugural session of the inception meeting of the projects on Trade and Transport Facilitation Audit in South Asia and Promoting MSMEs for Inclusive, Equitable and Sustainable Development in South Asia inaugurated by Honourable Shankar Koirala, Minister for Finance; and Industry, Commerce and Supplies, Government of Nepal today, the 1st October 2013 at Kathmandu, Nepal.

Secretary General SAARC CCI emphasized for providing business enabling environment and efficient and mechanical TF Mechanism to reap out benefits from SAFTA, citing the success of EU, NAFTA, COMESA, OECD and such other regional economic groupings as the result of effective implementation of TF measures.

“Effective TF mechanism equipped with supply chain management could not only engage MSMEs in economic circle of their respective countries but also contribute towards equitable and sustainable development in South Asia” said SG SAARC CCI and added that enabling business environment for promotion of MSMEs and Trade facilitation could reinforce each other.

Honourable Shankar Koirala, Minister for Finance; and Industry, Commerce and Supplies, Government of Nepal identified sensitive list, NTBs and PTB, supply side constraints and higher cost of trade within South Asia as the major impediments to implement SAFTA and reiterated the Government of South Asia to honour binding commitments on priority basis.

The meeting was organised by South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) and United Nation Development Program (UNDP) in collaboration with Australian Agency for International Development (AusAid).

Chaired by Dr. Raj Posh Pandey, Executive Director, SAWTEE The inaugural session was also addressed by H.E. Glenn White, Australian Ambassador to Nepal, Ms. Shoko Noda, country Director, UNDP (Nepal) and Dr. Ratnakar Adhikari, Chief Executive Director, SAWTEE.

Commenced yesterday, a two-day meeting which will be addressed by leading experts, private sector representatives including Mr. Muhammad Adnan Jall, Executive Committee Member, SAARC CCI (Pakistan), Government representatives and academicians from South Asian countries including CPD (Bangladesh), RIS and CUTs (India), SDPI (Pakistan) and IPS (Sri Lanka) will discuss possible ways and means for policy execution.

(MUHAMMAD IQBAL TABISH)
Secretary General