

CALL FOR PEOPLES SAARC 2008!

South Asian heads of government will meet in Colombo, Sri Lanka for the annual South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit between 27 July and 3 August 2008.

Regrettably, this SAARC summit will be no different to its predecessors in having little relevance to the needs and daily struggles of the peoples of South Asia. Its agenda will be shaped by the policy choices of post-colonial elites, while it has spectacularly failed to achieve regional unity or even facilitate grassroots initiatives in that direction.

Therefore, since 1993, social movements and peoples' organisations have also converged in parallel to the SAARC summit to raise our agenda for our region, to demonstrate our will for friendship, solidarity and visa-free movement of people across imposed boundaries, and to manifest our desire for a peoples union of South Asia.

On 18, 19 and 20 July 2008, hundreds of women, workers, peasants, artisans, urban and rural poor, students and youth, cultural activists, scholar activists, and representatives of marginalised and excluded social groups and communities from around South Asia will gather at **Peoples SAARC 2008 in Colombo, Sri Lanka**.

The main theme of Peoples SAARC 2008 is **"Towards A South Asian Union"** while the sub-themes include women's rights; demilitarisation, denuclearisation and democracy; right to food, livelihood, health, education and social security in the context of alternatives to neo-liberalism; environmental justice and natural resource rights; and South Asian solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles worldwide. A mass rally for peace and justice in South Asia will form part of the closing ceremony.

We call upon all those who affirm the vision of a peoples union of South Asia to join country-level preparations, mobilise for, and participate in Peoples SAARC 2008 in Colombo on 18, 19 and 20 July 2008.

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