



Advisory note:

European Parliament to host high level meeting: “Promoting social and economic justice in South Asia: EU Cooperation with the Region”

Brussels, 8 June 2011

The South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE), Eurostep and MEP Richard Howitt will hold the meeting “Promoting social and economic justice in South Asia: EU Cooperation with the Region”. The event will provide key insights on recent developments in the region, as well as provide perspectives from both the North and South. The meeting will be held in the European Parliament, from **12h00 to 14h00** on **14 June 2011** in room **ASP A3H-1**.

South Asia is home to almost 23% of the world's 6.6 billion people and contains a wide diversity of cultures, languages and religions. It also exhibits high levels of poverty coupled with conflict, gender discrimination, frequent disasters and the increasing threat of climate change. Despite substantial economic growth, millions remain in poverty in the region, evidence of deeply embedded inequalities that continue to serve as a poverty trap to the masses. It is clear that more needs to be done to combat these inequalities, and a re-evaluation of current EU cooperation policy is needed - this meeting provides a space to do just that.

The meeting will hear speeches from the following:

MEP Richard Howitt – member for the delegation for relations with the countries of South Asia and human rights and spokesperson for the Socialist and Democrat group (S&D) – will introduce the event. An MEP since 1994, Mr Howitt is a strong advocate of equality and human rights, and has continuously been a strong supporter of equality and justice both within and outside of the European Parliament.

Ms Rokeya Kabir, Executive Director of Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha and member of the SAAPE core committee has been a prominent women's rights activist for over 30 years. She has pioneered a number of women's movements in Bangladesh and continues to be a strong advocate for gender equality and women's rights in the country.

A lifelong activist for democracy and economic justice, Mr Farooq Tariq will bring key regional perspectives on social and economic justice in South Asia. He has represented the working people in dozens of national and international forums for the last 35 years and continues to be an influential advocate for economic justice within Pakistan and beyond.

Simon Stocker has been the Director of *Eurostep* since 1990. He has previously worked as Director of International Coalition for Development Action and as Deputy General Secretary at War on Want. Currently, Simon Stocker is also Secretary and member of the board for LDC Watch, a Non-Profit Organization. Through this work he plays an active role in a network of NGOs focusing on promoting sustainable development strategies in least developed countries

Mr Farooq Tariq and Ms Rokeya Kabir shall be visiting Brussels on 14-15 June and will be available for interviews. For further information contact Georgina Carr (gcarr@eurostep.org) on +32 2 234 6222

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