

**Dr. Gulshan Sachdeva – Centre for European Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University**  
**“The EU Response to Regional Integration Processes in South Asia”**

As a leading regional organization, The EU continues to encourage regional integration processes in the world, including South Asia. Since the inception of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 1985, the EU has believed that SAARC could play an important role in regional cooperation and dialogue in the region. Through technical assistance in trade matters and cooperation on improving market access for SAARC products, the EU has encouraged the process and further institutionalized its engagement through observer status in the grouping in 2006. The EU is also playing a supportive role in Regional Economic Cooperation Conferences (RECC) on Afghanistan as well on facilitating Trade and Transit agreement between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The EU has also supported Centre for Regional Cooperation within the Afghanistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Overall, the EU believes that through its economic influence in the region and its experience with regional integration, it can play an important role in regional cooperation in South Asia which can improve security situation the region.