



Minutes on
1st Youth Committee Election of SARTUC
Colombo, Sri Lanka
3rd July 2024

1st Youth Committee Meeting of the South Asian Regional Trade Union Council (SARTUC) was successfully concluded on 3rd July 2024 in Colombo, Sri Lanka with the participation representing all SARTUC affiliates from (Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka).

As observers in the first youth committee election, the senior trade union leaders from the host country (Sri Lanka) and youth trade union leaders from South Asia attended physically and observed the constitutional process of the first SARTUC youth committee election. The constitutional process was conducted smoothly and transparently, and most importantly, **Dr. S. M. Fahimuddin Pasha**, Director, Workers' Rights, ITUC-AP, attended as chief guest and explained the importance of the youth committee and its election process. It is a prestigious moment for SARTUC and its youth committee members.

Mr Laxman Basnet, General Secretary, SARTUC, welcomed all the participants and delegates to the first youth committee election of SARTUC. Moreover, he explained the constitutional process for the first SARTUC youth committee election. He appointed **Mr. Kishor Bikram Shah** (Programme Officer, SARTUC Secretariat) as the secretary of the Youth Committee.

With the direction from the General Secretary, SARTUC, **Mr. Kishor Bikram Shah**, Secretary to the SARTUC Youth Committee started the Roll call for the SARTUC youth committee election. He mentioned the list of nominations received for the youth committee from the SARTUC-affiliated countries (Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka) however, from India one female and for male two nominations were received. After mutual discussions it was agreed the two male nominations vote would be counted as one.

After the completion of Roll Call. **Mr. Kishor Bikram Shah** read out the provisions for the composition and other important points from the ToR of the SARTUC Youth Committee. The major highlights of ToR – SARTUC Youth Committee - 14-member Youth Committee, with 2 representatives (1 male, 1 female) from each of the 7 SARTUC affiliated countries. The Committee's mandate includes examining issues affecting young workers, expressing opinions on SARTUC's policies, planning programmes for young workers, and promoting their participation in the trade union movement. Furthermore, the ToR explains, committee members have voting rights to elect the Chair and Vice-Chair for the term of 4 years. Importantly, members must be 31



years old or younger, and the working language would be English. The SARTUC Secretariat serves as the Committee's Secretariat.

Mr. Mahendra Sharma, Advisor, SARTUC explained all the constitutional processes for the youth committee formation and invited the nominations for the Chair and Vice-Chair (one of them would be male, other one would be female), he explained this is a gender-neutral committee, as per international practice and norms. Two nominations were invited from members present for positions of Chair and Vice-Chair. Furthermore, he highlighted the provision of age - 31 years old or younger, at the time of election, consistent with ITUC and ITUC-AP norms. For the nomination – one should need a proposer and a seconder. He provided 10 minutes for the discussion and the nomination for the Chair. He further clarified, that if two or more than two nominations are received then the election will be necessary, and the Chair will be decided by voting.

Election Process

Chair Nominations

Ms. Iqbal Mustabeen, Pakistan

Proposer: Ms. Anshu Jha, India

Secunder: Mr. Divyanshu Singh/ Mr. Tushar Yadav, India

Mr. Sifat Chowdhury, Bangladesh

Proposer: Mr. Shane Vadivel, Sri Lanka

Secunder: Ms. Aishath Raaya, Maldives

Brother Mahendra asked if there were any other nominations for Chair. Then it was discussed whether to invite for the nomination for Vice-Chair as well, where, the General Secretary asked for suggestions from the delegates. **Brother Pasha**, explained the practice in the ITUC-AP Youth Committee, first, the nominations are being asked and whoever gets the highest vote is considered as Chair and second one as Vice Chair. However, gender parity has to be maintained.

Both of the candidates (alphabetically) were given 3 minutes each to present their agendas/speech for the election:

Ms. Iqbal Mustabeen, Pakistan

She discussed the importance of youth representation and bridging the generational gap within trade unions. She emphasised the need for a person from the youth to stand up and connect with both the younger generation and Gen Z. Youth's willingness to listen to ideas and serve as a bridge between youth and trade unions to address existing issues. Furthermore, she expressed that to overcome the issues, identification of those is



important and she had listed down all the issues. Finally, she committed to fulfilling the needs and suggestions of the youth for a more inclusive and engaged union, by listening to their ideas as well.

Mr. Sifat Chowdhury, Bangladesh

He expressed his personal experience witnessing workers being beaten by his boss, leading him to resign from a management position to advocate for workers' rights where he has been working with the eminent leader of the trade union. Then onwards, he is now working in the construction sector, leading a union for workers who had limited education, he aims to be their voice and support. Since the incident, he dedicated himself to improving conditions for workers and working for their rights. He is currently holding a position on a youth committee in BLF, hoping to make a difference in the international community as well. He promised to work for the betterment of the working class.

After the speech from both candidates, the election was conducted by a show of hands as agreed by the youth committee members.

Number of votes received by each candidate

Ms Iqbal Mustabeen ----- 9

Mr Sifat Chowdhary -----3

Sister Iqbal Mustabeen was elected as Chair of the SARTUC Youth Committee for 4 year term until next SARTUC convention.

Vice-Chair Nominations

Mr. Bike Shrestha, Nepal

Proposer: Ms. Kanishta Michael, Sri Lanka

Second: Mr. Saam Ismail, Maldives

Mr. Shane Vadivel, Sri Lanka

Proposer: Mr. Divyanshu Singh/ Mr. Tushar Yadav, India

Second: Ms. Iqbal Mustabeen, Pakistan

Both of the candidates (alphabetically) were given 3 minutes each to present their agendas/speech for the election:



Mr. Bike Shrestha, Nepal

He put his name forward for the position of Vice-Chair of the SARTUC Youth Committee as youth are underrepresented in trade unions, and he wanted to change the perspective towards workers and trade unionists. If elected, he would prioritize advancing forward using technological advancements. He would strongly raise youth issues at every level, including the executive meetings. Since SARTUC Secretariat is in Kathmandu, it would be easier for him to communicate with them, and he would regularly engage with the youth committee as well. He requested for their vote and promised to start communicating in English within 5 months.

Mr. Shane Vadivel, Sri Lanka

He expressed dedication to workers, particularly emphasizing the economic crisis in Sri Lanka and the challenges faced by the upcountry community, particularly to the plantation workers. He expressed that his dedication is not limited to his community and plantation workers but to entire youths of South Asia. He highlighted a commitment to trade unionism and advocacy for worker rights, recounting personal experiences and motivations. Moreover, he expressed a willingness to collaborate with neighbouring countries and urged voters to consider his dedication to youth and societal well-being rather than personal attributes.

Number of votes received by each candidate

Mr. Bike Shrestha -----5

Mr. Shane Vadivel -----7

Brother Shane Vadivel from Sri Lanka was declared as Vice-Chair of the SARTUC Youth Committee for 4 year term until next SARTUC convention.

First SARTUC Youth Committee Meeting

The first meeting after an election was held on 3rd July 2024, immediately after the election process. Chair, **Ms. Iqbal Mustabeen**, Chaired the meeting in the presence of all youth committee members. The meeting started with an introduction from all the members. Brother Kishor (programme officer, SARTUC), representative of the General Secretary, SARTUC - will serve as secretary of the youth committee. Youth committee members congratulated and expressed their



best wishes to the newly elected Chair and Vice-Chair. Further, the participants ensured to work together for the betterment of youths and workers.

Address by Chair, Youth Committee

She praised SARTUC for the initiation and emphasised the importance of youth representatives taking responsibility, setting a positive example, and actively addressing issues within their unions and organisations. She encouraged open communication, collaboration, and proactive problem-solving to translate ideas into action for the benefit of the younger generation in collaboration and working together. Moreover, she highlighted the importance of technology, and youths should promote online platforms for their meeting. Also, she encouraged everyone to identify the issues and continue the discussion through social media and connecting through WhatsApp. She expressed her gratitude for the support received and pledged to serve with dedication to create a more impactful platform for youth representation and advocacy.

Address by Vice Chair, Youth Committee

He expressed gratitude to various individuals from different countries across South Asia and proposed the creation of a WhatsApp group to address issues and discussions collectively, also, sharing the situation of workers and finding out their solution through discussion. He expressed the gaining of ideas by exchanging with each other in the meeting and understanding the situations of South Asian countries. Moreover, he emphasised the importance of treating everyone equally, offering assistance in tackling problems and using their network to support various nations. He repeatedly thanks individuals for opportunities and coordination.

Address by Secretary, Youth Committee

He expressed that he will be the focal point at the SARTUC Secretariat along with Sister Sweanta. He highlighted the #MigrateWithDignity Campaign, which shall be taken forward at the national and union level by the youth committee discussing SARTUC affiliates in their countries. Further, he requested to use online platforms to continue the meeting and discuss important topics like migration and youth engagement in the trade union movement. Importantly, he emphasised the importance of collaboration and active participation in upcoming activities and campaigns. Finally, he requested all the committee members to focus on working together to implement plans at different levels, from regional to country and union level.

Plan of Action

The first SARTUC Youth Committee members sit together and list out the plan of action (priority areas) to work for the youth committee collectively. Initially, the committee decided of more areas, however, with the intense discussion among themselves, they have finalised the major 3 priority areas:



1. Migration Issues

- International and local migration
- Minimum wages
- Education for migrant workers

2. ILO Convention 190

- Ratification campaigns
- Harassment
- Gender Equality

3. Campaign for Democracy

Concluding Remarks

Dr. SM. Fahimuddin Pasha, Director, Workers' Rights, ITUC-AP

Brother Pasha expressed gratitude for the active participation and commitment shown during the two-day programme, acknowledging the leadership of Brother Laxman, General Secretary - SARTUC, and Brother Mahendra Sharma, Advisor - SARTUC. Emphasizing the importance of addressing issues faced by migrant workers, he highlighted the need for collective action in the trade union movement. Moreover, he congratulated election winners and participants, praising their democratic spirit. Brother Pasha encouraged alignment of work plans with ITUC and ITUC-AP, focusing on ILO Convention 190, migrant workers, youth activities, and campaign for democracy. He urged attention to the digital economy and apprenticeship, citing concerns with the NEEM Scheme in India. Furthermore, he emphasized the importance of working on migration, Convention 190, and campaign for democracy by making the action plan for the next 4 years term by the Youth Committee. He acknowledged the efforts of Brother Kishor and Sister Sweanta, and finally, he thanked all the participants for their patience and support, closing with expressions of gratitude and respect.

Brother Laxman Basnet, General Secretary, SARTUC

Brother Basnet expressed gratitude to all for the formation of the first SARTUC Youth Committee and highlighted the need for knowledge sharing within the youth committee. He emphasized the inclusivity and active participation of all members, as well as the participants of the Regional Consultation as youth committee members without voting rights. Importantly, he humbly requested Brother Pasha from ITUC-AP for action towards organising two programmes before the year ends, encouraging financial support and activation of the youth committee as well as the women's committee. He emphasized the importance of Indian involvement and the potential for collective impact on a global scale. Finally, he urged every young trade unionist to engage actively in forming youth committees within their unions and countries to work collectively.



Conclusion

The SARTUC affiliates' representatives elected a Chair and Vice-Chair based on Gender Mainstreaming - one of the SARTUC's strategies and formed a 1st SARTUC Youth Committee for the next 4 years term. The newly elected youth committee members¹ comprise energetic and dynamic trade union leaders from across the region, who are committed to maintaining and developing a powerful and effective youth engagement in to trade union movement at the regional as well as national level and pledged to promoting and respecting the rights of working people, including of migrant workers and of enhancing the dignity of migrant workers. Moreover, the secretary for the SARTUC youth committee was also elected for the term of 4 years.

The successful conclusion of the SARTUC Youth Committee Meeting is an indication of the strong commitment and solidarity to engage young trade union leaders/members in the trade union movement. SARTUC is confident that the newly elected youth members will work tirelessly to build on the achievements of their commitments and take the labour movement to greater heights.

Decisions

- Formation of 1st SARTUC Youth Committee for the next 4 years term;
- Electing the Chair and Vice-Chair based on gender equality for the next 4 years term;
- India had two representatives (male) for the youth committee, however, both of them were considered as a single voice or one vote (while voting) which was accepted unanimously;
- The Secretary of the youth committee will be the focal point in the SARTUC Secretariat for the SARTUC Youth Committee;
- The first SARTUC Youth Committee meeting was conducted immediately after the election of Chair and Vice-Chair;
- Create a WhatsApp group for all the committee members to share experiences and challenges on different youth and labour issues, including migrant workers;
- Plan of action (priority areas) was made for the next 4 years to the SARTUC Youth Committee;
- Online platforms (online meetings) will be used for the regular meetings and discussion over the priority areas set by the first SARTUC Youth Committee meeting;
- Run the Campaign #MigrateWithDignity at regional, national, and union levels by the youth committee members and participants of the regional consultation.

¹ The newly elected SARTUC Youth Committee members are listed in the ANNEX-I.



SARTUC

ANNEX-I

First SARTUC Youth Committee

3 July 2024

Chair

Ms. Iqbal Mustabeen, Pakistan

Vice Chair

Mr. Shane Vadivel, Sri Lanka

Members

Ms. Aishath Raaya, Maldives

Ms. Anshu Jha, India

Mr. Bike Shrestha, Nepal

Mr. Divyanshu Singh/ Mr. Tushar Yadav, India

Mr. Ihsan Ullah, Pakistan

Ms. Kanishta Michael, Sri Lanka

Ms. Komal Maya Lama, Nepal

Ms. Muslaha Akter, Bangladesh

Mr. Saam Ismail, Maldives

Mr. Sifat Chowdhury, Bangladesh



ANNEX-II
List of Participants

SN	Country	Union	Name
1	Bangladesh	JSL	Ms. Samiha Binta Billal
2		BMSF	Ms. Tania Akter
3		BSSF	Mr. Md. Shafiqul Alam Sayem
4		BFTUC	Mr. Md Salik Miah
5		BMSF	Ms. Muslaha Akter
6		BLF	Mr. Sifat Chowdhury
7	India	INTUC	Mr. Divyanshu Singh
8		HMS	Mr. Tushar Yadav
9		SEWA	Ms. Anshu Jha
10	Maldives	MTUC	Ms. Aishath Raaya
11			Mr. Saam Ismail
12	Nepal	GEFONT	Mr. Bike Shrestha
13		NTUC	Mr. Sudeep Budhathoki
14		ANTUF	Ms. Komal Maya Lama
15	Pakistan	PWF	Ms. Iqbal Mustabeen
16			Mr. Ihsan Ullah
17	Sri Lanka	NTUF	Mr. Shane Vadivel
18		CWC	Ms. Kanishta Michael
19		SLNSS	Ms. M.R. Nilanthi Kumari
20	Director, Workers' Rights, ITUC-AP		Dr. SM. Fahimuddin Pasha
21	SARTUC Advisor		Mr. Mahendra Sharma
22	Secretary General, NTUF, Sri Lanka		Mr. Padmashree Ranawakaarachchi
23	Vice President, CWC, Sri Lanka		Mr. Rajamany
24	Secretariat		Ms. Sweanta Lama
25			Mr. Kishor Bikram Shah
26			Mr. Laxman Bahadur Basnet