

Statement by Rt. Hon. Mr. Sushil Koirala, Prime Minister of Nepal
at the Third BIMSTEC Summit of Heads of State or Government
Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, March 4, 2014

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies the Heads of State or Government,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour and privilege to represent Nepal in the third Summit meeting of the BIMSTEC being held in this beautiful capital city of Nay Pyi Taw. I bring with me the cordial greetings and best wishes from the people and Government of Nepal for the success of this meeting.

I congratulate the people and government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar for hosting this important summit meeting. On behalf of the people and Government of Nepal and on my own, I would like to extend sincere thanks and gratitude to His Excellency U Thein Sein, President of Myanmar and the Chairman of BIMSTEC, and friendly people of Myanmar for the warm hospitality extended to me and my delegation as well as for the excellent arrangements made for the Summit.

I am confident that with your wisdom and able leadership, summit meeting will reach fruitful conclusions.

Mr. Chairman,

Around 20 per cent of the world's population lives in BIMSTEC region. As we deliberate here, the world watches us with great attention and interest. The challenge before us is to prove our worth both individually as well as collectively and make the BIMSTEC process more concerned and relevant to the life of common people.

Since its inception, BIMSTEC has come a long way in providing a framework for cooperation among its member states on such vital areas as trade, investment, transport, energy, poverty alleviation, people-to-people contacts, counter terrorism and institution building, among others.

We are happy to note that BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat will soon commence its work with the appointment of the Secretary General. As he prepares to assume his office, we assure him of our support and cooperation in fulfilling his important responsibility and extend him best wishes for a successful tenure of office. We thank the Government of Bangladesh for offering to host the Secretariat. We believe that the decision to set up other institutions on weather and climate and culture will further provide much needed impetus to the process of regional cooperation in the interest of all Member States.

Mr. Chairman,

Our region confronts the formidable challenge of poverty. This is more so for the least-developed Member States in view of their deep structural impediments to economic growth and traditional challenges of underdevelopment and low levels of human development index. Our efforts should be geared towards freeing our people from the poverty trap.

Our region also confronts a wide array of interrelated challenges, such as terrorism, transnational crimes, human and drug trafficking, climate change, environmental degradation, food insecurity, natural disaster, and pandemic diseases. As these challenges undermine peace, security, stability as well as development endeavours, we must forge collaborative partnership to address them in an effective manner.

Our region has been the worst victim of terrorism. Nepal unequivocally condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. In this context, we underline the importance of BIMSTEC Convention on International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking.

The adverse effects of climate change have disproportionately affected our region and the poorest and most vulnerable segments of society are the ones hit hardest by such effects. Whether it is melting of Himalayan glaciers or the occurrence of floods and landslides in the hills and plains or the rise in sea level, our region is exposed to growing phenomena of climate change and we must collectively find appropriate ways and mechanisms to dealing with this issue.

Mr. Chairman,

We need to pool together our strengths and existing potentials of trade, tourism, hydropower, agriculture, mineral and marine resources, and technological advancement to make a difference in the life of our people. Investment in these and other productive sectors is key to unlock potential for economic growth and development.

The region has rich cultural heritage. There is convergence of our culture and customs, art, literature and religion that bind us together and give us a collective strength in a pluralistic setting. Building on our common cultural heritage and civilizational values, my delegation underscores the importance of developing Buddhist circuit in the region to foster people-to-people contacts and advance cooperation in the field of tourism.

The growing outward migration of young, dynamic and talented group of people is leaving long-term implications for the future from individual to family to society to national level. We urgently need to set our sights on using this precious resource for nation building by creating decent job opportunities for them.

There are many things that we can collectively accomplish with greater collaboration, coordination, and through enhanced integration. We need to identify missing links and build bridges. Overcoming infrastructure bottlenecks and promoting connectivity in terms of road and railway networks, air-links, ports and inland waterways, as well as communication networks must receive top priority on our agenda. It is in this context we underline the importance of BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistics Study (BTILS) as an important step in that direction.

Trade is an important instrument of economic integration. We believe that the Framework Agreement on BIMSTEC Free Trade Area and its Protocol can, if implemented fully and effectively in a timely manner, unlock huge potentials of intra-regional trade for economic integration. Regional economic integration should contribute to the development of all member states.

Energy is lifeline of economy. The BIMSTEC region possesses unmatched natural resources and vast complementarities with enormous possibilities of economic expansion for the common benefit of our people. Collaborative partnership among the member countries in the region will be required for the development, utilization and distribution of these resources for our mutual benefit. We look forward to an enhanced level of cooperation in this vital area.

Mr. Chairman,

This is an extraordinary time for us. We see uncertainties, turbulence and transitions in different parts of the world. It is our firm view that these can best be addressed through peaceful means within democratic framework that respects national unity and reconciliation.

It is in this respect, let me briefly touch on democratic transition in my country. The primary national task before us at home has been to institutionalize the democratic pluralism based on the rule of law through the promulgation of a new constitution by elected representatives. While we acknowledge with appreciation the goodwill, support and cooperation from the neighbouring countries as well as the larger international community in our drive towards political stability, economic growth, and development within an overall democratic framework, we look to an enhanced level of goodwill and support in the days ahead.

We extend our best wishes to the Government and the people of Myanmar for the success of ongoing transformation.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, as my country prepares to assume the chairmanship of BIMSTEC, I would like to assure you, Mr. Chairman and fellow leaders, that Nepal will work closely with you and make every possible effort to make BIMSTEC region, a region of peace, stability and prosperity.

I thank you all for your kind attention.