

Secretary General's remarks at Special SOM, Kathmandu, 11 Aug 2018

- His Excellency Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi, Foreign Secretary of Nepal;
- Their Excellencies Leaders of delegations to the Special Senior Officials' Meeting, Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen:

Good morning.

01. It is an honour for me to speak before the Special session of the Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM), a body that recommended my appointment as the Secretary General of BIMSTEC.

02. This Special SOM is being held primarily to facilitate the holding of the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit scheduled for 30-31 August 2018. The Fourth BIMSTEC Summit is going to take place after a gap of four years, and the last four years witnessed some developments that have far reaching impact for the BIMSTEC process. *First*, the permanent Secretariat of BIMSTC became operational on 13 September 2014 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. *Second*, the Goa Leaders' Retreat of 2016 reaffirmed Member States' resolve to make the organization stronger, more effective and result oriented. *Third*, the 20th anniversary of BIMSTEC was used by businessmen, scholars and think tanks to bring out a number of publications and policy papers to convey their strong support to reinvigorate BIMSTEC cooperation.

03. In this backdrop, the general expectations are naturally very high from the Fourth BIMSETC Summit. As stated by The Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of Nepal [on 31 May 2018], the upcoming Summit must assess BIMSTEC's role of past twenty years and chart out the plan of action with time bound targets for the future course of action in order to have positive impacts on the life of our peoples. The Secretariat was mindful of these directives while proposing the draft provisional agenda for the Special SOM.

04. The agenda of this meeting has mostly emanated from the decisions and directives of the previous three Summit Meetings, Goa Leaders' Retreat and Ministerial Meetings, as well as recommendations of SOM and JWG. Some proposals like discussion on the name of the Organization; discussion on BIMSETC Charter; Designating BIMSTEC Cultural Ambassadors; Establishment

of BIMSTEC Parliamentarians Forum; Establishment of BIMSTEC Network of Universities have been developed taking into account suggestions and recommendations of various track-2 initiatives of BIMSTEC including NBPTT, academia, and business community. All proposals have been justified by Secretariat Notes for the consideration of the Special SOM.

05. For the Special SOM, it will be important to examine the proposals that are contained in the Secretariat's Notes, and develop consensus on proposals that Member States find desirable and feasible. Once such consensus has been developed, the Special SOM may wish to classify proposals in three categories: a) proposals that need to be reflected in the Summit Declaration, b) proposals that may be recommended to the Ministerial Meeting for endorsement but do not merit to be reflected in the Summit Declaration, and c) proposals that need further deliberation at the proposed BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee level for placing before the inter-sessional SOM.

06. Today's meeting is expected to devote considerable time and attention to finalize the Summit Declaration based on the draft prepared by the Chair (Nepal) and circulated by the Secretariat. It will be important for the SOM to see that the Summit Declaration contains only those decisions and directives that the Member States are ready to implement. For example, if the SOM recommends that the Summit Declaration should include decision to establish BIMSTEC Development Fund, it would mean that the Member States have agreed not only to create the Fund but have also agreed to pay their contribution in full and within the time frame that may be agreed upon. In this regard, the Secretariat would like to commend Nepal for preparing a high quality draft for the Summit Declaration, the language of which by and large flow from the Agenda items of the Special SOM, for further deliberation towards the second half of the Special SOM.

07. Finally, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Government of Nepal for hosting the Special Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting today, in spite of their preoccupation with the preparation of the 4th BIMSTEC Summit.