Statement by H. E. Mr. Bharat Raj Paudyal, Foreign Secretary of Nepal at the 19th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting (MM) Bangkok, Thailand, 9 March 2023

Your Excellency Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand
Secretary General of BIMSTEC, His Excellency Tenzin Lekphell
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

At the outset, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Your Excellency the Chair and Honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand for hosting this meeting.

I would also like to commend Secretary-General Mr. Tenzin Lekphell and his able team at the Secretariat for their hard work in facilitating the preparation of this meeting.

Excellencies,

After a year since the Eighteenth Ministerial Meeting held in Colombo, we find ourselves in the midst of compounded challenges.

Though the Covid-19 pandemic has somehow subsided, it has left the scars of grief and pain in the society and the impacts on economy have been particularly worrying.

The mega challenges of global scale such as the climate crisis; rise in price of energy, foods, and fertilizers; economic slowdown and increased inflation have inflicted crippling effects on all of us.

The digital divide has increased inequality and social exclusion. Climate disasters are proliferating. Decelerating investment trend and increased trade imbalances have further constrained our ability to maintain macro-economic stability.

The combined effects of all these challenges have seriously constrained our capacity to meet the targets of Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The road to equity, resilience, and prosperity appears as daunting as ever.

In such a context, a genuine regional cooperation holds great potentials to address these defining issues of our time. Regional cooperation can provide solution when prospects of global level cooperation appear difficult. We have now the opportunity to contribute to the people’s agenda by accelerating regional cooperation and dispel the perception that regional platforms fail to harvest even the low hanging fruits.

As we meet today to add another milestone in the BIMSTEC process, these aspects should not go unheeded.
Excellencies,
In past 25-year, BIMSTEC has made good contributions towards fostering meaningful cooperation in our region. It has revitalized the long-standing cultural and civilization ties between South Asia and South East Asia.

The spirit of equality and partnership envisaged in the 1997 Bangkok Declaration stands as relevant as ever and serves the purposes of regional cooperation for peace, progress and prosperity.

At this moment, I recall the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit held in Kathmandu in 2018, which aptly prioritized the urgency of building robust BIMSTEC institutions. In that spirit and mandate, the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit held in Colombo accomplished the signing of the BIMSTEC Charter, adopted several important institution building instruments, reorganized and streamlined the sectors and sub-sectors of cooperation, and reenergized the BIMSTEC process.

Under the able Chairmanship of Thailand and active cooperation of all the Member States, BIMSTEC is in path of deeper and meaningful cooperation in line with the spirit of the Bangkok Declaration.

Rules of Procedures for BIMSTEC mechanisms have been finalized and we are going to adopt them today.

Charter of the BIMSTEC is in the process of ratification.

Today, we are endorsing the BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030.

Institutional strengthening of the BIMSTEC Secretariat has begun. We believe that only a resilient, resourceful and competent institution can deliver to its mandate.

Member States have started formulating short and long-term plans of action in their respective lead areas of cooperation.

Nepal has led the 'People-to-People Contact' sector. We have prepared the draft Plans of Action on tourism and culture. We are preparing to host the Sectoral Meetings as early as possible. Preparations are underway to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the establishment of BIMSTEC and to accelerate programmes and activities under our lead sector.

Nepal is pleased to coordinate 'Poverty Alleviation' as one of the sub-sectors of 'People-to-People Contact'. We believe that early operationalization of the BIMSTEC Development Fund can contribute to the implementation of synergetic and project-based efforts of economic and social progress in the region.

Besides, we are actively working towards creating and mobilizing other useful platforms of people-to-people contacts such as the Parliamentarians and Speakers forum. Similar efforts are underway creating separate forums of entrepreneurs, universities, and researchers to promote their engagements.

We believe that more robust coordination between and among the lead sectors would be important to produce results and complement each other.
Excellencies,

Nepal attaches high importance to the BIMSTEC process and the efforts of regional cooperation under this framework.

A more resilient, prosperous, and sustainable Bay of Bengal region demands a deeper level of engagements among us in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration. It also demands conscious, credible, and concerted efforts from all of us.

I reaffirm Nepal's unwavering commitment to contribute to the regional cooperation under BIMSTEC for the larger benefits of our people.

I thank you for your kind attention!