

**Statement by The Rt. Hon'ble Pushpa Kamal Dahal  
'Prachanda', Prime Minister of Nepal at the BIMSTEC  
Leaders' Retreat, Goa, India, 16 October 2016**

**Your Excellency Shri Narendra Modiji, Prime Minister of India**

**Fellow leaders from BIMSTEC member states**

**Secretary General of BIMSTEC**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am pleased to attend the BIMSTEC Leaders' Retreat in this beautiful city of Goa.

I thank Prime Minister Modiji for this opportunity and admire his leadership in taking this initiative.

Thank you, Prime Minister, for the kind invitation, warm hospitality and excellent arrangements made for the Retreat.

At the outset let me offer my heartfelt condolences and sympathies on the sad demise of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, King of Thailand. We stand by the friendly people of Thailand at this hour of profound grief.

**Excellencies,**

BIMSTEC member states are connected by cultures, history and geography. This commonality provides a strong foundation and motivation for cooperation.

BIMSTEC connects two vibrant regions of Asia, South East Asia and South Asia. Development potentials of this grouping are huge. With

over 1.5 billion of population and combined GDP of US \$2.5 trillion, this region can be a dynamic engine of growth and development.

The potential of this grouping cannot be unleashed without advancing integration. The engine of growth and development cannot perform in full capacity without intensifying cooperation. And BIMSTEC provides that vital platform for integration and cooperation.

Connectivity in all forms must be pursued with topmost priority. For a landlocked country like ours the importance of physical connectivity, among others, cannot be overemphasized.

Energy cooperation should be directed towards ensuring energy security for all of us. Region's diverse sources of energy could be harnessed to establish a reliable energy mix for the region. Nepal offers huge renewable energy sources in terms of hydropower.

Cooperation on trade, investment and other matters on economic agenda must advance urgently. Without progress on core areas, deeper integration will prove to be an elusive quest.

We need to expedite negotiations for concluding agreements on trade in goods, trade in services, mutual assistance in customs matters, among others.

We need to level up the playing field to ensure that opportunities and fruits of development will be shared by all the member states.

We need to put agriculture on high priority in our cooperation framework. Nepal, as the lead country on Poverty Alleviation, remains committed to bring tangible progress in this sector.

Establishment of BIMSTEC Buddhist Circuit and BIMSTEC Heritage Sites will be important initiatives to promote people-to-people contacts and tourism.

Progress in technological and human resources development is equally critical.

## **Excellencies,**

Unfortunately, our region is not free from challenges. We continue to face a multitude of problems. Threat of terrorism and extremism is serious and is testing our will and ability.

We must fight these evils resolutely and unreservedly. Acts of terrorism cannot be condoned on any ground.

Growing phenomenon of non-communicable diseases; spread of pandemic diseases; increased food insecurity, adverse impact of natural disasters and climate change have made our development journey extremely difficult.

However, these challenges are conquerable. Our collective will and concerted effort can overwhelm these problems. Strengthened partnership and collaboration can overcome these hurdles.

## **Excellencies,**

In the last two decades of BIMSTEC journey, we have made some progress. However, we have to acknowledge this fact –our progress has not matched our potentials; our progress has remained well below our expectation.

Responsibility is ours:

to overcome the causes of inadequate performance and accelerate the process of integration;

to make this region a region of development, peace and prosperity; and to decimate poverty, hunger and backwardness.

Responsibility is ours:

to make this region a region of initiatives as well as achievements; and

to ensure simultaneous widening and deepening of cooperation.

We must, therefore, set a clear vision for the next 20 years or so. Our vision must be underpinned by our firm commitment and concrete actions. We need a realistic and outcome oriented action plan to give practical meaning to our vision.

It is imperative that we constitute an Eminent Persons Group for this purpose and devise our vision in line with the UN 2030 Agenda including Sustainable Development Goals.

Before concluding, I would like to acknowledge the active role being played by the Secretary General and his team in coordinating and facilitating BIMSTEC process and activities.

While endorsing the outcome document of the Retreat, we are confident that the document will contribute immensely to the substantive preparation of the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit in 2017, for which we are eagerly waiting to welcome you in Kathmandu.

Thank you.