INAUGURAL SESSION
(19 NOVEMBER 2019)

SIXTH MEETING OF THE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL GROUP ON TRANSPORT,
KATHMANDU, 19 NOVEMBER 2019

STATEMENT BY H. E. MR. AMJAD HUSSAIN B. SIAL, SECRETARY GENERAL OF SAARC

Chief Guest, Hon. Minister for Physical Infrastructure and Transport of Nepal,
Hon. State Minister of Air Transport of Maldives,
Distinguished Secretary, Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport of Nepal,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to address the Inaugural Session of the Sixth Meeting of the Inter-Governmental Group on Transport.

We are greatly honoured by the august presence of the Hon. Minister for Physical Infrastructure and Transport of Nepal as the Chief Guest of this Inaugural Ceremony. His presence reflects the commitment that he personally and the esteemed Government of Nepal attach to this Meeting as well as to the SAARC process. We look forward to benefitting from his Inaugural Address, which, I am certain, will set the tone of deliberations of this important Meeting.

We wish to express profound gratitude to the esteemed Government of Nepal for hosting this Meeting and for warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to the delegates. We particularly thank the Ministry of Transport of Nepal for excellent arrangements made for this Meeting.

We note with appreciation important role being played by Nepal as the current Chair of SAARC.

We welcome the distinguished delegates to Kathmandu and to this Meeting, in particular. Their participation in this Meeting is reflective of willingness of the Member States to pursue effective regional collaboration for enhancing physical connectivity.

Hon. Chief Guest,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we are aware, improved intra-regional connectivity is sine-qua-non for effective regional integration. It will also promote people-to-people contacts, tourism and economic relations, leading eventually to the goal of the South Asian Economic Union, as envisioned by our leaders during successive SAARC Summits, including the Eighteenth SAARC Summit held in Kathmandu in November 2014.

In order to give impetus to the overall objective of enhanced physical connectivity, at the Sixteenth SAARC Summit in April 2010, our leaders declared 2010-2020 as the ‘Decade of Intra-regional Connectivity in SAARC’. Since the declaration of the Decade, several efforts are underway to link the eight countries in the region through road, air, rail and sea. In this context, SAARC Motor
Vehicles Agreement, SAARC Railways Agreement, and SAARC Air Services Agreement are under consideration. It is earnestly hoped that this Meeting will be able to make substantive progress in finalizing the three important Agreements. It is also hoped that the SAARC Cargo and Passenger Ferry Service will be operationalized soon.

Hon. Chief Guest,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you may be aware, during the Eighteenth SAARC Summit, our leaders renewed their commitment to substantially enhance regional connectivity in a seamless manner through building and upgrading roads, railways, waterways infrastructure, energy grids, communications and air links to ensure smooth cross-border flow of goods, services, capital, technology and people. We need to work strenuously to realize their commitment.

During the Eighteenth SAARC Summit, our leaders also emphasized the need to link South Asia with contiguous regions, including Central Asia, and beyond, by all modes of connectivity and directed relevant authorities to initiate national, regional and sub-regional measures and necessary arrangements. Accordingly, we are in consultation with the Asian Development Bank to conduct a Study to explore possibilities for improving intra-regional connectivity within the region and beyond. Additionally, the work on updating the SAARC Regional Multimodal Transport Study with the technical and financial assistance of the Asian Development Bank is in progress.

Moreover, the operationalization of the Infrastructure Window of the SAARC Development Fund marks a significant headway, opening up ample avenues for project-based collaboration in the development of infrastructure across the region. Additionally, the Member States are in the process of conceptualizing projects in the field of connectivity for collaboration with SAARC’s observers.

In concluding my remarks, I wish to once again thank the esteemed Government of Nepal for hosting this important Meeting.

I wish the delegates fruitful deliberations and a pleasant stay in Kathmandu.

I thank you.

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