# *Speech of H.E. Ambassador Prof. Bishwambher Pyakuryal on the Occasion of the Fourth Constitution Day andn National Day of Nepal*

September 20, 2018

## General

* Hon. Thalatha Atukorale, Minister of Justice and Prison Reforms

Hon’ble Ministers, Your Excellences, Ambassadors and High Commissioners, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

* I feel privileged to welcome you all this evening to commemorate Fourth Constitution Day and National Day of Nepal. National Day is observed on September 20 as the new **Constitution of Nepal 2015,** was promulgated on this day.
* The new constitution, which came into effect by replacing the Interim Constitution of 2007, has divided the nation into seven provinces and completed the transition of Nepal from constitutional monarchy to republicanism and from a unitary system to federalism.
* Thank you all for your participation in this special occasion. I feel happy to extend our best wishes and warm greetings to all the Nepali community who live in Sri Lanka and Maldives and our Sri Lankan and Maldivian friends.
* The exchange of high level visits at various levels have strengthened existing bilateral relations to a new height. In the past, former President H.E. Mahinda Rajapaksa had made State visit in 2009 and also participated in 18th SAARC Summit in November 2014 in Kathmandu.
* The Continuation of high level bilateral visits in recent years have been quite significant in the sense that it has opened up various areas of bilateral cooperation encompassing the broader horizons of socio-economic, cultural and human relations.
* At the invitation of H.E. Maithripala Sirisena, President of Sri Lanka, Rt. Hon. Bidya Devi Bhandari, President of Nepal visited Sri Lanka to attend the concluding ceremony as a chief guest of the International Vesak Day held in Kandy on May 14, 2017.
* H.E. President Sirisena participated in BIMSTEC on August 30-31, 2018 and extended an official goodwill visit to Nepal until 1-2 September 2018 at the invitation of Nepal’s President Bidya Devi Bhandari. The President of Sri Lanka was accompanied by his Spouse Mrs. Jayanthi Pushpakumari, Vasanta Senanayake, State Minister of Foreign Affairs and other high level officials of the Government of Sri Lanka. I am especially happy to note that I had the privilege to accompany the President of Nepal Rt. Hon’ble Bidya Devi Bhandari to Sri Lanka and Sri Lankan President H.E. Maithripala Sirisena to Nepal.
* During President Sirisena’s visit to Nepal, the two Presidents witnessed the exchange of two Memoranda of Understanding between the Government of Nepal and the Government of Sri Lanka. The first MoU, which was signed was between the Institute of Foreign Affairs of Nepal and the Bandaranaike International Diplomatic Training Institute of Sri Lanka and the second one was Cooperation for the Youth Development.
* Nepal and Sri Lanka have always been working closely in regional, sub-regional and global forums including the UN system. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations on 1 July 1957, bilateral relations of two countries are marked by goodwill, mutual understanding and cooperation.
* There is a felt need for stronger bilateral links between Nepal and Sri Lanka with an enhanced people-to-people contacts. The government of **Nepal** and **Sri Lanka** have made **Bilateral Trade Agreement** on April 3, 1979 – it grants provisions of MFN treatment. On March 2-4, 2009 during Sri Lankan President’s State visit to Nepal, **two bilateral agreements** were signed regarding **trade** and **aviation** – this agreement covered a range of issues, including a proposed **Free Trade Agreement** (without tariffs and any other hindrances), promotion of tourism, investment, trade in services, information technology, cultural relations, and education. The **Bilateral Air Service Agreement** has been made to improve connectivity that can also prove beneficial to facilitate cultural/and religious tourism.
* Between Sri Lanka and Nepal, a Bilateral Joint Commission has been established which aims at meeting annually to facilitate bilateral economic, trade, and cultural relations. The need is to regularize this meeting.
* The President of Sri Lanka during his visit to Nepal visited the birth place of Lord Buddha on September 1, 2018. The President has announced his government's readiness to contribute to completing the Lumbini Master Plan, if a specific proposal was given from the Government of Nepal.
* Nepalese do not forget Sri Lanka’s assistance in renovating 2015 earthquake devastated Anandakuti Bihar and Rato Machhindranath Temple.
* There has been series of policy and institutional reforms to encourage foreign investments in Nepal. Foreign Investment and Technology Transfer Act (FITTA), 2016 is waiting for Cabinet approval. FITTA ensures equal treatment in FDI; the policy accommodates provisions for easy procedure by guaranteeing repatriation. Online automation in the Department of Industry and Company Registration office is now operational. “One Window Policy” has been introduced. After negotiating with the employers and trade union, “No Work No Pay” policy has been endorsed.
* There is a wide range of items that could be imported from Nepal and also major investment potential is there in Nepal for Sri Lankan investors especially in the areas like hydropower, road and transport infrastructure, tourism, agriculture, health, education and ICT. collaboration in tea research, heritage management, archeology and value-addition in semi-precious stones should be expedited and Sri Lanka can impart knowledge for inland fisheries to landlocked Nepal where fish consumption is skyrocketing. A Free Trade Agreement should be designed in line with a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which covers broad areas of economic cooperation extending beyond tariff and non-tariff measures by covering investment and trade in services
* Possibilities also need to be explored, from both the supply side and demand side perspectives such as transfer of technology, knowledge and skills in selected sectors from Sri Lanka and Nepal where there exists complementarity which can be shared. Transfer of skilled and semi-skilled professionals in various categories can be identified and used by both countries.
* As there has been political stability and restoration of peace in Nepal, I urge Sri Lankan investors to invest in Nepal. At the Nepal Investment Summit held on March 3, 2017 Sri Lankan investors have pledged to invest a total of US$5 million in Nepal largely on hydropower, solar and wind power.
* Thousands of Sri Lankan Buddhists visit Lumbini for pilgrimage and quite significant number of Nepalese Buddhist monks stay in Sri Lanka for religious and educational purposes. Currently, more than 50000 Sri Lankans visit Nepal. Most of them visit Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha. This has brought the peoples of both countries closer.
* Direct air connectivity is the basic requirement to boost trade and tourism between both the countries. As Gautam Buddha International Airport will be completed within 2019, direct flight between Sri Lanka and Nepal will be possible to enhance pilgrimage tourism between the two countries.
* My thanks go to the hardworking staffs of the Embassy of Nepal and the management team of Hotel Taj who created such a beautiful environment to celebrate this function.
* Last but not the least, we would like to congratulate Sri Lanka for accepting the Chair of BIMSTEC from Nepal during recently held Fourth BIMSTEC Summit in Kathmandu on August 30-31, 2018.