

**STATEMENT BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY GENERAL KHIN NYUNT  
PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR  
AT THE FIRST BIMST-EC SUMMIT MEETING  
BANGKOK , THAILAND  
( 31 JULY 2004 )**

**Your Excellency Mr. Thaksin Shinawatra,  
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand ,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,**

First of all, on behalf of my delegation and on my own, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the Chairmanship of the BIMST-EC Summit Meeting. I am convinced that under your experienced and able leadership, the meeting will be successful.

Allow me also to extend our sincere appreciation and gratitude to you, Mr. Prime Minister, and through you to the Government and the people of Thailand for the warm hospitality and the excellent arrangements made for the summit. It is, indeed, an honour and a pleasure for me to take part in today's historic meeting to exchange views on how to further strengthen our cooperation.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend our heartfelt congratulations and a very warm welcome to our two new members, Nepal and Bhutan . We are of the view that their membership in the organization will not only promote greater economic cooperation among BIMST-EC Member States but also enhance greater contacts and better understanding among the peoples of this region. In this regard Myanmar stands ready to work closely with our two new members in order to achieve our desired goal.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The Bangkok Declaration which gave birth to our organization stated that to create an enabling environment for rapid economic development within BIMST-EC, we should intensify and implement specific cooperation projects which are supportive as well as complementary to national development plans of the Member States. Accordingly, six areas of cooperation have been identified and through these areas of cooperation, we have further strengthened and developed our economic ties.

Tourism, one of the sectors of cooperation identified under BIMST-EC, holds great prospect for the region. The development of tourist industry can contribute to poverty alleviation by creating new economic opportunities and rising income in rural areas. In this regard, Myanmar welcomes the launching of "Visit BIMST-EC Year 2004 "

Myanmar is a cultural destination popularly known as "the Land of Pagodas ". Apart from being known as "the Land of Pagodas ", Myanmar also offers a variety of tourist attractions such as its rich culture, nature endowed with tropical forests, unspoiled beaches and snow capped mountain ranges, world famous gems such as rubies, sapphires and jade and handicrafts. While promoting and developing our tourist industry, we also continue to preserve our cultural heritage.

Promoting transportation linkages among the Member States will help to expand trade, tourism and people to people contact. In addition, transport linkages within the grouping can strengthen regional economic growth and integration and of cementing the bonds based on cultural and historical affinities.

Myanmar together with Thailand and India are discussing on a co-operative endeavour to construct a highway from Moreh in India to Mae Sot in Thailand through Bagan in Myanmar know as the "India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway Project".

In the transportation linkages sector, in addition to linkages by highways, we also need to find ways to facilitate our maritime transportation network. In this regard, Myanmar presented the "Development of the Dawei Deep Sea Port Project" to the Sixth BIMST-EC Ministerial Meeting held in Phuket, the Dawei-Nyaw Byin International Deep Sea Port will not only be to the economic benefit of Myanmar and Thailand but will also greatly facilitate trade and commerce of freight forwarders and exporters within the region.

The free Trade Area for the BIMST-EC region is appropriate and timely because BIMST-EC is an important link between ASEAN and SAARC. We are convinced that the Free Trade Area will act as a stimulus to the further strengthening of economic cooperation among Member Countries. The free Trade Area for BIMST-EC will also help to lower costs, increase intra-regional trade and investment, and increase intra-regional efficiency.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Member States of BIMST-EC for allowing us to continue our role as the lead country in the energy sector. During six years as the lead country, we have kept our commitments, organized, and convened committee of Experts/Officials Meetings regularly. We have also established committees, task forces and finalized the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the energy sector committee.

Here, I would like to acknowledge that the achievements made so far in the energy sector has been through cooperation and coordination among the BIMST-EC countries.

**Mr. Chairman,**

We are encouraged that during the short span of over seven years of existence, BIMST-EC has seen considerable progress in the identified areas of cooperation. Some of the achievements we have thus made so far include signing of the Framework Agreement on Free Trade Area under Trade and Investment Sector and launching of the "Visit BIMST-EC Year 2004" under Tourism Sector. We should also be aware of the fact that although there is progress in some sectors of cooperation, there are other areas where we still need to make greater efforts.

It is our firm belief that to become a genuinely effective forum to bring progress and prosperity to our people, BIMST-EC must be more action-oriented as well as result-oriented. In this endeavour, Myanmar pledges to cooperate and work together with all its members to achieve the desired goal.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.