

**REPORT OF  
THE 12<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF BIMSTEC SENIOR OFFICIALS' MEETING  
(28 AUGUST 2008, NEW DELHI)**

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**I. Opening of the Meeting**

1. The Twelfth BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) was held in New Delhi, India on 28 August 2008. Delegates from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand attended the Meeting. The list of participants is at **Annex-I**.
2. The Meeting was opened by H.E. Mr. N. Ravi, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, who chaired the Meeting.

**II. Adoption of the Agenda**

3. The Agenda as adopted by the Meeting is at **Annex-II**.

**III. Business Arrangements**

4. The Meeting took note of the programme and business arrangements for the 12<sup>th</sup> SOM.

**IV. Report of the Chairman of the BIMSTEC Working Group (BWG)**

5. The Report of the Chairman of the BIMSTEC Working Group (BWG) was presented by H.E. Ms. Latha Reddy, Ambassador of India to Thailand and is at **Annex III**.
6. The Meeting noted the Report with appreciation. The SOM commended the BWG for its valuable coordinating role in furthering the work of BIMSTEC and expressed appreciation for the support provided by Thailand.

**V. Report of the Lead Countries on the thirteen priority sectors**

7. The Lead Countries presented progress reports on the activities in the priority sectors of cooperation.

**Areas of Cooperation**

- i. Trade and Investment
- ii. Technology

**Lead Country**

Bangladesh  
Sri Lanka

iii. Energy	Myanmar
iv. Transport and Communication	India
v. Tourism	India
vi. Fisheries	Thailand
vii. Agriculture	Myanmar
viii. Cultural Co-operation	Bhutan
ix. Environment and Disaster Management	India
x. Public Health	Thailand
xi. People-to-People Contact	Thailand
xii. Poverty Alleviation	Nepal
xiii. Counter-Terrorism and Trans-national Crimes	India

### **Trade and Investment**

8. The SOM reiterated that finalising the BIMSTEC Free Trade Area Agreement on Trade in Goods remains an important priority as a significant 'deliverable' at the 2<sup>nd</sup> BIMSTEC Summit. It welcomed the progress made at the Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC) meetings in Yangon, Myanmar (November 2006); Paro, Bhutan (June 2007); Dhaka, Bangladesh (September 2007) and New Delhi, India (March 2008). SOM urged the TNC to make special efforts to reach consensus on the outstanding issues by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Summit. SOM underlined the importance of regular Senior Trade/Economic Officials' Meetings as well as the meetings of the Trade/Economic Ministers.
9. SOM noted the Expert Group Meeting on issues relating to facilitating business travel among BIMSTEC member countries. On the basis of the Joint Statement of the 8<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting (Dhaka, December 2005) and specifically para B6 thereof, SOM mandated that the issue be revisited by an Expert Group. SOM also noted the outcome of the 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of BIMSTEC Business Economic Forum in Bangkok, Thailand (October 2006).

### **Technology**

10. SOM noted the progress in the setting up of the BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Exchange Facility and welcomed the Concept Paper circulated by Sri Lanka in this regard to be considered by an Expert Group meeting to be convened in Colombo shortly. SOM also noted the Expert Group meeting on Protection of Biodiversity and its Intellectual Property Dimension in Colombo, Sri Lanka (October 2006).

11. SOM welcomed the Memorandum of Association (MoA) for establishment of the BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate (BCWC) in India, finalised at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of BIMSTEC member-countries in New Delhi, India (May 2007). On the issue of the Director of the BCWC, SOM agreed that the first Director should be from India as the host country of BCWC. As regards the future Directors of the Centre, the issue will be addressed in the Joint Working Group set-up to examine the modalities. SOM endorsed the MoA and recommended it for approval by the BIMSTEC Ministers for signing at the 2<sup>nd</sup> BIMSTEC Summit. The MoA is at **Annex IV**

## **Energy**

12. SOM welcomed and endorsed the Memorandum of Association (MoA) for the establishment of the BIMSTEC Energy Centre in India finalised at meeting in New Delhi, India (December 2006). On the issue of the Executive Director of the Energy Centre, SOM agreed that the first Executive Director should be from India as the host country of the Energy Centre. As regards the future Executive Directors of the Centre, the issue will be addressed in the Joint Working Group set-up to examine the modalities of the Permanent Secretariat. SOM recommended the MoA for the Energy Centre for approval by the 10<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for signing during the 2<sup>nd</sup> BIMSTEC Summit. The MoA is at **Annex V**
13. SOM noted the numerous activities in the sector including meetings, workshops, etc. underlining the importance attached to this sector in the context of ensuring energy security.

## **Transport and Communication**

14. SOM welcomed the progress by way of meetings, workshops, and training courses. SOM noted the BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistics Study (BTILS) conducted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) including the proposed institutional mechanism and terms of reference, which was being evaluated by member countries.
15. SOM emphasized the importance of cooperation in the Transport and Communication sectors for intra-BIMSTEC connectivity covering road, rail, aviation and shipping sectors which would facilitate increased trade, investment and tourism flows.

## **Tourism**

16. SOM welcomed the progress in terms of the Workshop of Tourism Ministers in Kathmandu, Nepal (August 2006) which adopted the Kathmandu Declaration on Tourism Cooperation and the Plan of Action. SOM appreciated the establishment of a BIMSTEC Tourism Information Centre in New Delhi from 1 July 2007 and its role in promoting BIMSTEC intra-regional tourism. SOM welcomed the setting-up of the BIMSTEC Working Group on Tourism and endorsed its Terms of Reference (ToRs) and recommended the ToRs for approval of the BIMSTEC Ministers. The ToR is at **Annex VI**

## **Fisheries**

17. SOM welcomed the progress in finalising the Terms of Reference (ToRs) of the BIMSTEC Sectoral Committee on Fisheries at the Workshop on Fisheries Cooperation held in Phuket, Thailand (May 2007). SOM also noted the Joint Survey on fisheries in the Bay of Bengal organised by Thailand (October–December 2007) and its follow-up meeting to be held in Bangkok in January 2009. SOM also endorsed the proposed cooperation regarding inland fisheries.

## **Agriculture**

18. SOM noted that activities in this sector of cooperation by way of Workshop in Bangkok (August 2006) and Expert Group meetings at Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar (March 2007) and New Delhi, India (April 2008). SOM appreciated the finalisation of nine common projects along with coordinating country: Bangladesh (1), Bhutan (1), India (4), Myanmar (2) and Thailand (1). SOM recommended the expeditious implementation of these common projects.

## **Cultural Cooperation**

19. SOM welcomed the progress for setting up of the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission (BCIC) and BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory (BCIO) pursuant to the recommendation of the Expert Group Meeting held in New Delhi, India (December 2006) to finalise the MOU to establish the BCIC and BCIO.

20. SOM endorsed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and recommended the signing of the MoU at the 2<sup>nd</sup> BIMSTEC Summit. The MoU is at **Annex VII**

### **Environment and Disaster Management**

21. SOM noted the activities in this sector including workshops and training course for enhancing capacities and developing a Disaster Management Road Map to ensure rapid response through adequate networking and standby arrangements.
22. SOM noted that the BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate in India (to be set up under the Technology sector) may in the second stage look at disaster mitigation and management.

### **Public Health**

23. SOM noted the activities in this sector including meeting, study visit and on-going programme of scholarships.

### **People-to-people contact**

24. SOM welcomed Thailand's initiative to organise several events in connection with the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of BIMSTEC in Bangkok during June 2007. SOM also noted the various activities by BIMSTEC countries to promote people-to-people contacts.

### **Poverty Alleviation**

25. SOM welcomed the first BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation held in Dhaka, Bangladesh (July 2008) and recognized that BIMSTEC countries were actively involved in realizing the MDGs as a way of comprehensive poverty alleviation and discussed a number of specific proposals for the future. SOM noted with satisfaction the Plan of Action being prepared by Nepal in this regard.

### **Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crimes**

26. SOM noted the various meetings of the Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crimes (JWG-CTTC) in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar (Jan 2007) and its four Sub-Groups.
27. SOM welcomed the progress made on the text of the BIMSTEC Convention on this issue and urged the early finalization of the

BIMSTEC Convention for signing at the forthcoming Summit. SOM agreed that the Joint Working Group (JWG) be convened urgently for the purpose. It welcomed the offer of India to host the JWG meeting on mutually convenient dates.

#### **VI. BIMSTEC Secretariat and BIMSTEC Centres**

28. SOM recalled the need for setting-up a Permanent Secretariat for BIMSTEC at an early date. SOM noted the offers of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to be the host for the location of the Secretariat and recommended the setting up of a Joint Working Group (JWG) with a mandate to look at all aspects including organisational structure, financing mechanism and staffing pertaining to the BIMSTEC Secretariat. Thereafter, the JWG will also look at operational structure and financing of BIMSTEC Centres. SOM urged the early convening of the JWG so that it could present its report at the next SOM and Ministerial Meetings for announcement at the Summit. SOM welcomed the offer of Bangladesh to host the first meeting of the JWG in Dhaka as soon as possible on mutually convenient dates.

#### **VII. Cooperation with ADB**

29. SOM thanked the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for the BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistics Study (BTILS) as well as for the Concept Papers for cooperation in the fields of Tourism and Energy. SOM noted that the BTILS of ADB including the proposed institutional mechanism and terms of reference was being examined by BIMSTEC member countries. SOM decided that future cooperation with the ADB in Tourism and Energy sectors will be examined by the BIMSTEC Working Group (BWG) in Bangkok.

#### **VIII. BIMSTEC Centre**

30. SOM appreciated the continued support extended by Thailand to the BIMSTEC Centre in Bangkok and the proposal to expand the Centre's activities.

#### **IX. BIMSTEC Official Website**

31. SOM noted the working of the BIMSTEC official website ([www.bimstec.org](http://www.bimstec.org)) maintained by Sri Lanka in coordination with the BIMSTEC Centre and the BIMSTEC Working Group and appreciated the improvements carried out.

**X. Chairmanship of BIMSTEC**

32. SOM welcomed Myanmar's statement that it would host the 12<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting in 2009 as well as assume the chairmanship of BIMSTEC.

**XI. 2<sup>nd</sup> BIMSTEC Summit**

33. SOM welcomed the holding of the 2<sup>nd</sup> BIMSTEC Summit in New Delhi in November 2008, which will provide a renewed impetus for cooperation in BIMSTEC.

**XII. Any other matter**

34. SOM acknowledged the usefulness of Preparatory Meetings at the Director General (DG)/Joint Secretary level prior to SOM or Ministerial Meeting, without institutionalizing the arrangement to provide the necessary flexibility regarding its convening by the host country as and when required.

**XIII. Consideration and adoption of SOM Report**

35. SOM adopted by consensus the above report of the 12<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting held in New Delhi on August 28, 2008.

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28 August 2008