

**Remarks by the Secretary-General of BIMSTEC
at the Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between
the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)
and the BIMSTEC Secretariat**

05 March 2023, Sheraton Hotel, Dhaka

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His Excellency Dr. Mashiur Rahman, Economic Affairs Adviser to the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh;

His Excellency Mr. Shabbir Chowdhury, Secretary, Bilateral (West), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh;

Dr. Johan Swinnen, Director General of International Food Policy Research Institute – (IFPRI)

Dr. Shahidur Rashid, Director for South Asia of IFPRI;

Dr. Akhter Ahmed, Bangladesh Country Representative of IFPRI;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good Afternoon!

Today is a special occasion and a special day for BIMSTEC. I am personally very happy that BIMSTEC is finally signing the Memorandum of Understanding with International Food Policy and Research Institute (IFPRI) and cementing our formal relationship.

The process to get to this day of signing - has not been simple; it was a long wait as it required a lot of follow ups, negotiations and consensus from all the seven member states. However, we are grateful that the MOU is now ready to be signed - and we would like to thank all our seven member states for their support and cooperation.

With this Ladies and Gentlemen, May I now extend a very warm welcome to all the dignitaries and distinguished guests who are here today to witness this historic signing ceremony between IFPRI and BIMSTEC.

I would like to particularly thank His Excellency Dr. Mashiur & His Excellency Mr. Shabbir for giving away your time from important matters and be with us at this ceremony - and Dr. Johan, who has taken the trouble - to travel all the way from Washington to Dhaka - to sign the MOU with BIMSTEC. And thank you Distinguished Guests, we deeply value and appreciate your presence here today.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

Kindly allow me to share with you all, a brief background of BIMSTEC on this historic MoU signing ceremony. BIMSTEC as we all know, comprises of seven Member States from South and Southeast Asia - and is a home to about 1.8 billion people.

Despite significant progresses made by our seven member states in recent years, many people in the region still lack access - to safe, nutritious and affordable food; - while the region, is also facing severe challenges, such as climate change, natural disasters, and economic instability.

Agriculture and Food Security Sector, is therefore one of the core areas of BIMSTEC cooperation. The BIMSTEC Agriculture Ministers recently met on 10th of November 2022 to discuss on regional agricultural policies and strategies. We are happy, that the meeting adopted a BIMSTEC Plan of Action - on Strengthening BIMSTEC Agricultural Cooperation - which aims to reduce rural poverty, ensure food security, food safety and better nutrition.

Distinguished Guests

We all know, that IFPRI is a global institution working with more than 70 countries providing research and policy options - on agriculture, food and nutrition.

Given the commonalities between IFPRI and BIMSTEC to reduce poverty and ensure food safety and security, I see no reason why the two institutions should not come together to uplift the lives of the peoples of our region.

Beginning today, we mark an important step. We strengthen our partnership to work towards a common goal. We will have a formal framework - to collaborate and partner on a wide range of activities.

Specifically, the MoU will facilitate the two institutions - to collaborate and focus on policy analysis, research, capacity building, dissemination of knowledge and best practices, agriculture trade, food safety and climate change. These are areas that are critical for BIMSTEC to achieve its sustainable development.

Before I conclude (ladies and gentlemen), I and my colleagues at the Secretariat must acknowledge and extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Shahidur Rashid, who has been the key, the main link, and the main driving force of our association, partnership and the BIMSTEC-IFPRI Memorandum of Understanding. - (Dr Rashid, Thank you once again for your hard work and for bringing this two institutions together.)

Let me also thank our friends from IFPRI-Bangladesh, for your support, cooperation and excellent arrangements made for this event.

Finally, let us all hope and look forward - for a successful execution of the MoU signed today between IFPRI and BIMSTEC & May it benefit - the peoples of our region in years to come.

Thank you.
