

Remarks by H.E. Tenzin Lekphell, Secretary General of BIMSTEC

**BIMSTEC Silver Jubilee Quiz Contest
Thimphu, Bhutan, 15 February 2023**

His Excellency Dr. Tandi Dorji, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of the Royal Government of Bhutan

His Excellency Ambassador Shib Nath Roy,

His Excellency Ambassador Sudakar Dalela,

Distinguished Guests,

Participants in the BIMSTEC Quiz from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand,

Friends from the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning and a very warm welcome to everyone, to Thimphu, and to this first ever - BIMSTEC Quiz Competition.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Globally, young people - are a powerful force for change.

As we all know, the world is at a crucial point in history- where social, political, economic, and environmental issues - have compelled our young people to become more aware of what goes on around them - and begin to take a stand and make their voices heard - on global issues on a global platform.

We see young people around the world using modern technology combined with easy access to information, - to mobilize and to amplify their voices - to make a difference on a range of issues, especially on issues such as climate change.

I am sure that everyone here is familiar with the saying "*We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.*"

Ladies & Gentlemen,

The importance of empowering children and youth has become extremely important in today's world. They must have a voice. They must be involved and have a say in designing the kind of future that they want - not just for their individual nations but the region they belong to, and the world at large.

It is with this intention of involving youth in BIMSTEC's 25th anniversary events that the Secretariat reached out to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Bhutan and the Bhutan Broadcasting Service Corporation to seek their assistance to organize this Quiz Competition for students from all the BIMSTEC Member States.

I am extremely grateful to his Excellency Dr. Tandi Dorji, Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade; all the officials of the Ministry; and Ms. Thinley Yangchen (our quiz master for today), and the officials of the Bhutan Broadcasting Service, for readily agreeing to the Secretariat's proposal to hold this Quiz competition in Thimphu - and for all the assistance and support extended - to make this event a reality.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sometimes when I interact with young people in our region, I get the impression that they know much more about countries in the West that they have not even visited than they do about their own region.

I hope that the 14 students who are here in Thimphu today, representing their countries and the BIMSTEC region will interact with each other, create fond memories and help foster “fraternal spirits” that are essential for meaningful regional cooperation to take place.

I also hope that this event will inspire the BIMSTEC Member States to take initiatives to create more and more opportunities for our young people to come together and interact with each other in time to come.

Once again, let me to take this opportunity to extend a special welcome and convey my deep gratitude to His Excellency Dr. Tandi Dorji, for stepping away from important matters of State for a little while, and joining us at this Quiz competition today.

Let me also thank H.E Ambassador Roy, H.E. Ambassador Sudhakar and other distinguished guests for sparing your time to be with us here today. I would also like to thank Bhutan Agro, Bhutan Telecom & Tashi Cell for welcoming our student participants with some gifts; and those who are not physically present, but helped us in numerous ways to make this event a reality.

I wish all of you (the student participants) - the very best in the competition today. Meanwhile, let me also remind you that although there will be a winning team at the end of this contest, (as such is the nature of contests), that every one of you is a winner for participating in this first BIMSTEC Quiz Competition.

I encourage all the students from all the BIMSTEC countries who are here today to make full use of this opportunity to make new friends, learn from this experience, share your ideas and use your youthful energy and power to dream big dreams and do great things for yourself, your country, your region and the world at large.

Thank you.