

**5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee**  
**13-15 September 2022**  
**Bangkok, Thailand**

**Special Remarks by the Secretary General of BIMSTEC**

Mr. Chairman,  
Heads of delegations of the BIMSTEC Member States  
Distinguished Delegates,

Good Afternoon.

**01.** First of all, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand for hosting the Fifth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC) in-person, in Bangkok.

I would also like to thank all the delegates from the BIMSTEC Member States for their participation in this Meeting.

This is the first occasion on which I am participating in a BPWC Meeting since joining the Secretariat in November 2020, and I look forward to working with all of you during the next three days, engaging in fruitful deliberations to carry forward the objectives envisioned by the Leaders of BIMSTEC.

I take this opportunity, Mr. Chairman, to congratulate Thailand for assuming the chairmanship of BIMSTEC. I strongly believe that, under the chairmanship of Thailand, BIMSTEC will be able to benefit from Thailand's ASEAN experience to pursue the BIMSTEC agenda with renewed vigor.

**02.** The BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee - BPWC (as we all know) is a very important part of the overall BIMSTEC mechanism.

It is mandated to deliberate on a number of key issues that are vital for the institution of BIMSTEC.

Therefore, it has been directed to meet at least twice in a year.

However, this (Fifth) BPWC meeting is taking place after a pause of two years (the 4<sup>th</sup> BPWC meeting was held on 31 August 2020).

This long gap between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> meetings resulted from a decision taken during the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting in August 2020 - that the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting would be hosted by the next Chair of BIMSTEC - that is Thailand.

However, the 5<sup>th</sup> Summit for Thailand to assume the Chairmanship, that was originally expected to take place in late 2020 was postponed twice and was ultimately held only on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March this year.

As a result of this 5<sup>th</sup> BPWC meeting taking place after a gap of two years, and also following the adoption of the Charter as well as the 5<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Summit Declaration, the agenda of the meeting is quite heavy in substantive terms, which requires careful, dedicated and focused attention of all delegates, in line with the vision of our BIMSTEC Leaders.

### **Distinguished delegates,**

**03.** With Thailand and Sri Lanka sending officers to the Secretariat as Directors, the Secretariat now has Directors from all the BIMSTEC Member States.

Some of the important steps taken since the last BPWC meeting include –

- The signature of the BIMSTEC Charter during the 5<sup>th</sup> Summit which currently awaits ratification by the Member States
- Rationalization and reorganization of Sectors and Sub-sectors of BIMSTEC which was approved by the 5<sup>th</sup> Summit
- Signature of key legal instruments during the Summit, namely, the **BIMSTEC Convention** on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, the **MoU on Mutual Cooperation** between Diplomatic Academies/ Training Institutions of BIMSTEC Member States, and the MoA of BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility (TTF) in Colombo
- Approval of the Template for the Memorandum of Association (MoA) on the establishment of BIMSTEC Centres and Entities
- And the Organogram of the BIMSTEC Secretariat

**Mr. Chairman,**

**04.** Since the BIMSTEC Charter has been signed and adopted, the BPWC now has before it, the important task of formulating the Rules of Procedure for BIMSTEC mechanisms, as instructed by the 17<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting.

The Secretariat has updated and circulated the draft Rules of Procedure for BIMSTEC mechanisms based on the relevant Articles of the BIMSTEC Charter.

I hope that this meeting will successfully discuss and adopt the proposed Rules of Procedure for submission to the BIMSTEC Senior Officials.

**05.** The importance of timely holding of meetings, especially of the core BIMSTEC mechanism, has been reiterated by the different BIMSTEC Forums.

However, the **frequency** of BIMSTEC Ministerial Meetings and Summits, have not been regular and consistent.

In this connection, an important matter before this Meeting, is the finalization of a time-frame for the Annual Ministerial Meeting, as tasked by the 22<sup>nd</sup> SOM, with a view to carrying out the overall BIMSTEC activities in an uninterrupted manner.

**06.** This Meeting's Agenda also includes, finalization of the Terms of Reference for an *ad hoc* Eminent Persons Group. This, in my view, is an important undertaking for BIMSTEC during this silver jubilee year.

As approved by the 20<sup>th</sup> SOM, the Secretariat has circulated for the consideration of member states, - a Concept Paper on the establishment of this EPG, to deliberate and make recommendations on the future direction of BIMSTEC.

The EPG, ideally, would look at BIMSTEC's existing practices objectively, considering the fact that the Organisation has completed 25 years, and make visionary recommendations on accelerating regional cooperation as envisaged in the Bangkok Declaration, the Summit Declarations, and the BIMSTEC Charter, aimed at building a strong, prosperous, resilient, and progressive Bay of Bengal region.

**07.** The agenda of the meeting also includes –

- Discussion on the Administrative and Disciplinary Rules of the Secretariat,
- Secretariat's estimated budget for FY 2023,
- Revision of salaries and allowances of the Secretary General, Directors and General Services Staff,
- Discussion on the proposed "BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030",
- Proposal for proper utilization and management of the proposed financial assistance of one million USD to increase the operational budget of the BIMSTEC Secretariat by the Government of India,
- Discussion on developing the Plan of Action or Work Programme of the reconstituted Sectors and Subsectors of BIMSTEC cooperation, and
- Discussion and finalization of the programmes to be organized by the Member States for the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of BIMSTEC.

**08.** The Secretariat has circulated the relevant documents and notes relating to all these Agenda items, in advance. I hope all member states have received all the relevant material. The Secretariat remains ready to assist all delegates in this respect.

**09.** Finally, I hope this meeting will produce positive & constructive recommendations to be presented to the next session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting, for consideration.

Thank you.