

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

Ninth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Agricultural Cooperation
08 September 2022, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar [Virtual]

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Mr. Kyaw Swe Lin, Director-General, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation of Myanmar

Heads of Delegations of the BIMSTEC Member States

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning!

First of all, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Government of Myanmar for hosting the Ninth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Agricultural Cooperation virtually today.

I would also like to extend my deep appreciation to all the delegates from the BIMSTEC Member States for their participation in this important Meeting.

The Eighth BIMSTEC Expert Group meeting on Agricultural Cooperation was held last year in August 2021 - and it is very encouraging to see this Group meeting again - this year.

With this same momentum and commitment, I am confident that it will fetch tangible results in the near future and benefit the peoples of this region.

Distinguished Delegates,

Agriculture (as we all know) is the backbone of the economy for most of our Member States. And Deepening Agricultural Cooperation amongst the BIMSTEC Member States can not only contribute food & nutritional security but also - farmers' prosperity, job creation, poverty alleviation and enhance agricultural trade and investment in the region. Therefore, BIMSTEC Agriculture cooperation has remained high on the BIMSTEC agenda and it has been reconstituted as Agriculture and Food Security Sector, with Myanmar as Lead Country, during the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit.

Today's meeting has a number of important issues to discuss. However, I would like to highlight two vital issues for the Meeting today - to consider. **First**, - is the Plan of Action on Strengthening BIMSTEC Agricultural Cooperation and **Second**, the Memorandum of Understanding between International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and BIMSTEC.

As instructed by the Leaders at the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit, the Secretariat, in consultation with the Lead Country, has developed *the draft Plan of Action on Strengthening BIMSTEC Agricultural Cooperation*. The Meeting today will be very fruitful if this Plan Of Action can be finalized, so that we can forward it to the Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials on Agriculture for its endorsement, and subsequent approval by the Second BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture (BAMM), which is expected to be held in November 2022.

Another main agenda of today's meeting is to finalize the MoU between IFPRI and BIMSTEC to build partnership in the field of agriculture, food and nutrition. Our Foreign Ministers in their 17th Ministerial Meeting - *encouraged the Secretariat to establish meaningful partnership with appropriate regional and international organizations to strengthen project-based cooperation under Agriculture and Food Security Sector*. Lack of funds to implement common agricultural projects had been an issue that was repeatedly discussed in the past Expert Group Meetings. Therefore, it is important to expedite in finalizing the MOU between IFPRI and BIMSTEC, as we anticipate IFPRI as our development partner, to fund and take up some of these common projects that have been identified.

Meanwhile, let me also take this opportunity to reiterate recommendations made by Senior Officials of Agriculture during their last meeting, asking the Lead Coordinating Countries to explore funding and initiate activities in their respective common projects.

Distinguished Delegates,

BIMSTEC is a sector-driven regional organization and we need to develop strategic sectoral objectives. I firmly believe today's Meeting will be able to draw these strategic objectives and enhance BIMSTEC Agricultural Cooperation.

To conclude, I would like to assure, that the Secretariat will be at the disposal of the Member States and all delegates present here - to make your deliberation fruitful. With this, I would like to wish the Ninth Expert Group Meeting on Agricultural Cooperation - a great success.

Thank you.
