

Secretary General's Remarks for BIMSTEC Day – 06th June, 2022

- H.E. Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen, Hon'ble Foreign Minister of Bangladesh
- H.E. Mr. Tipu Munshi, Hon'ble Commerce Minister
- H.E. Mr. Shahriar Alam, Hon'ble State Minister for Foreign Affairs
- Hon'ble Ministers
- Secretary General of SAARC
- Officials of the Government of Bangladesh
- Excellencies, and Representatives of the BIMSTEC Member States
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to this BIMSTEC Day Reception!

My colleagues at the BIMSTEC Secretariat and I, are very happy to host you here today - and would like to convey our warmest felicitations to the Governments and peoples of the member states on the auspicious occasion of the BIMSTEC day – 6th of June when BIMSTEC was founded.

This year, the BIMSTEC Day celebration is special as we are also celebrating its Silver Jubilee anniversary. We would like to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency, the Honorable Foreign Minister of the Government of Bangladesh for taking out time from his busy schedule to honour us, as the Chief Guest of today's celebration.

We are also equally delighted to have the Honorable Minister of Commerce and the Honorable State Minister of Foreign Affairs – for gracing the occasion with their presence here today.

Likewise, we would also like to thank all Your Excellencies, Dignitaries and Friends for being with us on this special occasion.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Twenty-five years ago on the 06th of June 1997, the regional cooperation journey of BIMSTEC - began with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration. Since then, BIMSTEC has steadily made progress in several fields. The Institutional framework is being carefully crafted at a measured pace, to facilitate regional cooperation.

Legally binding frameworks and instruments have mostly been established, therefore, laying a strong foundation for regional integration and cooperation. Establishing the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka in 2014, and the adoption of the BIMSTEC Charter at the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit in Colombo this year (2022) are two very important milestones that BIMSTEC has achieved.

In addition, the 5th Summit also approved the rationalised sectors of cooperation, ensuring a better focused and coordinated approach, as we forge ahead. BIMSTEC over the last 25 years has also proven to be a bridge of friendship, connecting the peoples of south and south East Asia, - bound together by cultural heritage, mutual goodwill and a shared vision of development and prosperity.

However, the journey has not been without its challenges. In the last two years, COVID-19 has impacted all countries, including BIMSTEC. Our peoples of all seven Member States suffered personal loss, grief, and pain, - as the pandemic took a heavy toll on the health systems, economies, and communities in the region.

Events unfolding in other parts of the world these days, - are creating ripple effects across the world including our region, -worsening the condition of our already battered economies. Nonetheless, we believe crises also create opportunities, and BIMSTEC holds much promise as a platform for cooperation.

With the disruption in global supply chains due to COVID-19, the need and opportunity to create intra-regional trade has emerged stronger. Member states are now increasingly trying to put in place - the trade facilitation measures to expedite & increase intra-regional trade.

Connectivity has always been a priority for the region. We are happy that the Master Plan for Connectivity is now adopted, and we hope, our member states will take advantage of the plan, and implement its components to ensure the achievement of our aspiration - for a truly connected Bay of Bengal Region.

To conclude, I wish to express deep gratitude to the Government of Bangladesh for hosting the BIMSTEC Secretariat, extending unstinted support and committing to provide a new modern iconic building for the Secretariat. I also thank Sri Lanka, for hosting the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit this year on 30th March, and the current Chair, Thailand, for guiding us, as BIMSTEC steers forward in its 25th journey - to implement important decisions and directives of our leaders.

Lastly, on this important occasion, I wish to reaffirm the Secretariat's commitment to work hand-in-hand with all member states, at all times, to pursue the goals and objectives of BIMSTEC as envisioned by the member states. Thank you and wish you all - a great BIMSTEC evening.
