

**Special Remarks by H.E. Mr. Tenzin Lekphell,  
Secretary General of BIMSTEC at the Eighth Meeting of the  
BIMSTEC Expert Group on Agricultural Cooperation  
(31 August 2021, New Delhi, India) (Virtual)**

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**H.E. Dr. Trilochan Moha-patra, Secretary, Department of Agriculture Research and Education, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare of India**

**Heads of Delegations, Delegates from the BIMSTEC Member States;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Good morning.

At the outset, I wish to express my gratitude to the Government of **India**, for hosting the Eighth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Agricultural Cooperation virtually in New Delhi today.

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

**Agriculture/** was included as a priority sector of BIMSTEC cooperation with Myanmar as the Lead Country in 2005. **Cooperation in this sector** began with the formation of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Agricultural Cooperation and the first meeting of this expert group was held in 2007. **So far**, it has met seven times.

**Noting the importance** of integrating agriculture in the region, the BIMSTEC Member States, decided, to upgrade the institutional mechanism of Agricultural Cooperation. **Accordingly**, the First BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture (BAMM) was held in 2019 preceded by the First BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting on Agriculture (SOM-A) in Myanmar. **I would** like to take the opportunity today, to thank Myanmar for its leadership in the BIMSTEC Agriculture Cooperation

**Excellency, Distinguished Delegates,**

**The Eighth Meeting** of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Agricultural Cooperation being held today, has a number of important tasks before it.

**Firstly**, the Meeting will take stock of the progress made so far by the earlier Expert Group Meetings, Senior Officials meeting of Agriculture and BIMSTEC Agriculture Ministers Meeting.

**Secondly**, the Meeting today will also deliberate on the progress made in Agriculture Cooperation in relation to the **seven (7) identified common projects**. **We hope**, that the expert group today will come up with some appropriate recommendations that will translate from “identification” to some “real action projects” and benefit the people of the region.

**Thirdly**, I am hopeful, that this Meeting will generate some concrete ideas, to further deepen agricultural cooperation, among the Member States. **My sincere appreciation** also goes to India, for its offer to provide BIMSTEC Scholarship in Agriculture, which indeed, is a great initiative for promotion of Agricultural cooperation in the region.

**Excellency, Distinguished Delegates,**

**An important issue**, which has repeatedly come up for discussion, is how to finance the identified common agricultural projects. **While Member States** have been using their own resources, to host workshops and seminars; some identified common agricultural projects could not be implemented due to lack of funding.

**The 1<sup>st</sup> Senior Officials Meeting of Agriculture**, recommended the Lead Coordinating Countries, to make extra effort to explore funding and implement the projects for which they are responsible. **As such**, I request the Member States, to look into this matter and initiate implementing the common projects.

**It may also be recalled**, that **this Expert Group**, while it is tasked, with expediting the implementation of common projects, it has also been mandated, to develop new agriculture proposals and projects.

**Therefore**, while reviewing the existing Common Projects, Delegates, may also like to consider dropping those, which do not seem feasible, and instead, develop new proposals that can be implemented.

### **Excellency, Distinguished Delegates**

**As per the guidance of BIMSTEC Leaders**, the Secretariat underlines the importance of holding Meetings – regularly, to ensure a continuous momentum of cooperation among the Member States.

**In the context** of Agricultural cooperation, the Member States are encouraged to hold the Agricultural Ministerial Meeting once in two years.

**We therefore hope** to have commitment from the Member States on the holding of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Senior Officials Meeting of Agriculture and the 2<sup>nd</sup> BIMSTEC Agriculture Ministers Meeting.

**Distinguished Delegates**, as the Secretariat is also mandated, to coordinate and facilitate the implementation of the BIMSTEC activities, we have prepared, a draft **Plan of Action** which may be reviewed and considered by the Member States.

**To conclude**, I would like to assure, that the Secretariat, will be at the disposal of the Member States and the meeting today, to make your deliberations fruitful and result-oriented.

**My colleague Mr. Han**, Director in-charge of Agriculture at the BIMSTEC Secretariat, will provide all necessary support to the Meeting.

I wish the 8th Meeting of Expert Group of Agriculture Cooperation, a big success.  
Thank you.

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