H.E. Dr. Trilochan Mohapatra, 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 1st 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 2nd Senior Officials Meeting of Agriculture and the 2nd 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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