

**Welcome Remarks by H. E. M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General of BIMSTEC
at the Conference on Enhancing Energy Cooperation in the BIMSTEC Region**

BIMSTEC Secretariat, Dhaka, 25 February 2020



- H. E. Dr. Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, BB, Hon'ble Adviser for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Affairs to the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh (Chief Guest)
- Mr. Derrick S. Brown, Mission Director, USAID, Bangladesh;
- Delegates from the BIMSTEC Member States;
- Your Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners;
- Senior Officials of the Government of Bangladesh;
- Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen: Good Morning!

I would like to begin by welcoming all of you to the “Conference on Enhancing Energy Cooperation in the BIMSTEC Region”. I wish to express my sincere thanks to USAID, SARI/EI and IRADe for their generous support in organizing this Conference. My special appreciation and gratitude go to the Hon’ble Adviser for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Affairs to the Hon’ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh for his gracious presence. And very importantly, let me recognize the presence of distinguished participants from the BIMSTEC Member States, who are at the core of the whole exercise.

02. BIMSTEC is a unique regional organization that brings together seven countries from South and South-East Asia – Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The main purpose of the organization is to promote regional cooperation in the areas of common interest to achieve rapid economic growth. Energy cooperation is a priority sector of BIMSTEC cooperation.

03. BIMSTEC with more than 1.6 billion population and a combined GDP of 3.5 trillion US Dollars is one of the fastest growing regions in the world. The demand for energy will keep on increasing to keep pace with the rapid economic growth of the countries of this region. The countries of this region are heavily dependent on imported energy resources in the absence of optimum utilization of energy potentials. BIMSTEC wants to promote energy security of this region by facilitating intra-regional energy trade as well as developing hydro-power and other renewable sources of energy.

04. In 2018, the Member States of BIMSTEC concluded the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Establishment of the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection to facilitate electricity trade in the region. The MOU provides a broad framework for the Parties to cooperate towards the implementation of grid interconnections with a view to promoting power transmission and electricity trade in the BIMSTEC region. The BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection Coordination Committee (BGICC) has been established to coordinate implementation of grid interconnections and trade in electricity. I am happy to note that some of the members of BGICC are present today. We are hoping that the Committee will soon hold their first meeting to begin implementation of the provisions of the MOU.

05. By signing the MOU on Establishment of the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection, BIMSTEC Leaders have expressed their strong political commitment to establish a region-wide electricity grid. It is now for the experts to do the practical work as to how they will implement the provisions of the MOU. It is heartening to see that most of the BIMSTEC Member States are already having bilateral arrangements for energy trade. The recent policy decision by India regarding cross-border electricity trade involving a third country promises to facilitate Bangladesh to trade electricity with Nepal and Bhutan besides India. This could indeed be a first major step towards achieving a BIMSTEC energy grid.

o6. As mandated by the Second BIMSTEC Energy Ministerial Meeting held in Bangkok in 2010, the BIMSTEC Secretariat is now in contact with development partners to undertake a BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection Master Plan Study. Subject to approval of the Member States, the Secretariat intends to partner with SARI/EI in developing the long overdue Master Plan on Grid Interconnection in order to identify the bottlenecks and missing links in developing a regional grid without duplicating the already existing bilateral and trilateral initiatives among the Member States.

o6. Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen: By all means, this is an opportune moment for establishing a region-wide electricity grid. A common BIMSTEC Grid can serve as a strong foundation for further integration of BIMSTEC. The BIMSTEC Secretariat looks forward to a pragmatic outcome from this Conference. We will take due note of the suggestions and ideas that would come out of this Conference and pass them on to the First Meeting of the BGICC. I wish this Conference a great success. Thank you.
