

**Secretary General's remarks at the Workshop on Master Plan  
17-18 September, Bangkok, Thailand**

Delegates of the Member States,  
Officials from ADB,  
Ladies and gentlemen:  
Good morning.

1. I am happy to welcome you all to this important workshop on BIMSTEC Master Plan on Transport Connectivity. I would also like to offer my sincere thanks to all of you for your valuable contribution towards preparation of the draft Master Plan on BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity.
2. We have made significant progress since the initial Concept Paper on the Master Plan drafted by Thailand was presented at the Fifteenth Ministerial Meeting in August 2017. This would not have been possible without the support of ADB and active cooperation of the Member States. During the course of deliberations in the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit and in the preceding meetings emphasis was laid on adherence to the time schedule i.e. 30 September to finalize the Master Plan.
3. The Leaders during the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit reiterated their resolve to establish seamless multi-modal transportation linkages and smooth, synchronized and simplified transit facilities through the development, expansion and modernization of highways, railways, waterways, sea routes, and airways in the region. The Leaders also directed the authorities to speed up their efforts to conclude the BIMSTEC Coastal Shipping Agreement and the BIMSTEC Motor Vehicle Agreement as early as possible taking into account the special circumstances and needs of the Member States.

4. The Leaders noted with satisfaction the preparation of the draft BIMSTEC Master Plan on Transport Connectivity and called for its early adoption and thanked the Asian Development Bank for providing support to prepare the Master Plan. The Leaders tasked the BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Working Group (BTCWG) to work out the modalities for its implementation, giving due attention to the special circumstances and needs of the Member States.
  
5. It is heartening to see that since holding of the second BTCWG meeting in Bangkok, the Member States have completed first round of discussion on draft Coastal Shipping Agreement and on the draft Motor Vehicle Agreement. We are hoping to commence further negotiations soon on both these draft Agreements. That is an indication that Member States are moving faster than ever before towards enhancing connectivity in all its forms. The same kind of seriousness has been demonstrated by the Member States in developing the BIMSTEC Master Plan on Transport Connectivity since the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Working Group (BTCWG).
  
6. Regarding the draft Master Plan on BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity, so far the Secretariat has circulated five different versions incorporating therein the up to date comments received on the draft. The First draft was circulated on 21 June 2018 which was based on desk study by Mr. Winston, Consultant appointed by ADB, as well as with inputs from the Member States during the field visits by Mr. Winston and with inputs from the BTILS. The second draft was circulated by the Secretariat on 05 August 2018 which incorporates inputs received from various ADB officials. The Third version of the draft was circulated by the Secretariat on 05 September 2018 which incorporates comments received from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka on the first draft. The Fourth version of the draft was circulated by the Secretariat on 11 September 2018 including therein the relevant details based on Fourth BIMSTEC Summit Declaration. And finally, the

fifth version was circulated on 13 September with a minor editorial change as pointed out by India.

7. As inputs from the Member States have already been considered in the draft, we hope that no substantial changes or additions will be needed now. Nevertheless, both the Secretariat and the ADB felt it appropriate to provide another opportunity for the Member States to look at the latest version of the draft before its finalization by the next BTCWG meeting to be held later this year, and that is precisely the reason for holding this workshop. I am hopeful that as this workshop is being attended by senior officials from the Member States, we will have fruitful deliberations on the draft. We intend to organize the 3rd BTCWG at the earliest so that the draft Master Plan may be endorsed by the BTCWG before the Member States take final approval from their respective Governments.
  
8. Before I conclude, I would like to update the Member States and the delegates that the report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> BTCWG has been approved by the 19<sup>th</sup> Senior Officials Meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2018. Report of the 19<sup>th</sup> Senior Officials Meeting has been endorsed by the 16<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2018 which was in turn approved by the 4<sup>th</sup> Summit on 31 August 2018. Accordingly, the Terms of Reference of the Master Plan has the approval of the Leaders of the Member States. It should be the endeavor of all of us to adhere to the time scheduled specified in the approved ToR of the Master Plan. Thank you.