

Secretary General's remarks at the Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation
20 December 2017
Colombo, Sri Lanka

His Excellency Maithripala Sirisena, Hon'ble President of Sri Lanka

His Excellency S B Dissanayake, Hon'ble Minister of Social Empowerment, Welfare and Kandyan Heritage

Excellences, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning.

1. It is a great honour for me to attend the inauguration ceremony of the 3rd BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation in this beautiful city of Colombo. I would like to express my deep appreciation and sincere gratitude to the Government of Sri Lanka for hosting this important BIMSTEC Meeting and extending warm hospitality to the National delegations and the Secretariat officials.
2. BIMSTEC is an intergovernmental organization comprising seven member states namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The objective of the organization is to promote economic development, social progress and stability through collaboration through varieties of sectors including trade and investment, transport communication, energy cooperation, combating terrorism and organized transitional crime, technology transfer and poverty alleviation.
3. In spite of the unprecedented economic progress and technological advancement during the past decades, poverty is still a stark reality all over the world. The whole world has renewed its commitment to poverty alleviation by adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development whose core objective is to end acute poverty by 2030. It is heartening to see that the Bay of Bengal region is not lagging behind in the global fight against poverty.
4. In the recent years, the Member States of BIMSTEC have achieved significant progress in poverty alleviation. However, there still remain millions of people in our region who suffer from acute poverty. For this

reason, BIMSTEC leaders have stressed the need for poverty alleviation since the creation of BIMSTEC. The First BIMSTEC Summit held in Bangkok in 2004 underscored the need for establishing an exclusive forum to address the issue of poverty alleviation in the region. Accordingly, the First Ministerial Meeting on Poverty was hosted by Bangladesh in 2008, which decided to draft the BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Poverty Alleviation (PPA). The 2nd Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation held in Nepal in January 2012 endorsed the draft Poverty Plan of Action (PPA) to be implemented by the Member States individually or collectively.

5. The BIMSTEC Poverty Plan of Action provides a comprehensive strategy to address poverty in a holistic manner. The objective of the BIMSTEC Poverty Plan of Action is to identify and implement collective actions for poverty alleviation in the Bay of Bengal region. The identified areas of collective action include mutual cooperation in research and technology transfer among BIMSTEC Member States, easy access to markets for agricultural products, testing and certification capacity building, encourage flow of tourism within BIMSTEC regions for job creation, reduction of non-tariff barriers, collaboration in fighting climate change and cooperate in disaster risk reduction etc.

6. It bears a great symbolic value to host the 3rd Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation in Sri Lanka for two reasons. First, Sri Lanka has been highly successful in poverty alleviation, and all other BIMSTEC Member States can learn from the Sri Lankan experience. Second, the President of Sri Lanka has declared the year 2017 as the year of alleviating poverty. It is also noteworthy that technology transfer has been identified as one of the important interventions to reduce poverty in the BIMSTEC region. Sri Lanka can take pride in the fact that BIMSTEC has recently finalized the text of the Memorandum of Association on the establishing of Technology Transfer Facility in Colombo.

7. Thanks to the excellent leadership and hard of citizens, Sri Lanka leads the Bay of Bengal region in many areas including education, social progress and human resource development. Sri Lanka will become the Chair of BIMSTEC next year, and we hope that the entire Bay of Bengal region will benefit from Sri Lanka's leadership.

8. I believe that the 3rd Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation being held today in Colombo will play a very important in our collective effort to eradicate poverty in the Bay of Bengal region. This meeting will adopt the COLOMBO Statement on Poverty Alleviation, which will add new momentum to our collective fight against poverty. Thank you.
