



Secretariat
Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral
Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)

Priority Communication

BIMSTEC/SEC/08/02

The Secretariat of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) in Dhaka presents its compliments to the Ministries of External Affairs/Foreign Affairs of the BIMSTEC Member States and has the honour to refer to the **Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM)** held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 28 August 2018.

The Secretariat is pleased to forward herewith the **Report of the Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting** [BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/25] along with annexure.

The Secretariat of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) in Dhaka avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Ministries of External Affairs/Foreign Affairs of the BIMSTEC Member States the assurances of its highest consideration.



BIMSTEC Dhaka, 03 September 2018

Ministries of External Affairs/Foreign Affairs of the BIMSTEC Member States
[Kind attention: National Focal Points of the BIMSTEC]

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BAY OF BENGAL INITIATIVE FOR MULTI-SECTORAL TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION



Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting
28 August 2018
Kathmandu, Nepal

Report of the Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting

Agenda Item 01: Opening of the Meeting

01. The Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) was held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 28 August 2018.

02. Delegations from the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the Kingdom of Bhutan, the Republic of India, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Nepal, the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and the Kingdom of Thailand participated in the Meeting. The list of the participants is at **Annex I**.

03. In the Opening Remarks, H.E. Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Nepal warmly welcomed all distinguished delegates to the Meeting and thanked them for their participation at this important 19th Session of the SOM back-to-back with the Sixteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting and the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit. He underscored the importance of this Meeting for considering reports of various sectoral meetings since the holding of the 18th SOM and adopting important recommendations for future course of action. Emphasizing pivotal role of this Meeting for the preparation of the upcoming Summit and Ministerial Meeting as well as finalization of the draft Kathmandu Declaration, he hoped that the Meeting will bring to a successful conclusion with the valuable contributions of the delegations. He called upon all the delegations to participate actively and contribute their best to make the Summit a grand success.

04. While highlighting the vast potentials and full opportunities in BIMSTEC region, he also noted the challenges facing the BIMSTEC region such as weaker connectivity, wide spread poverty, food, water and energy scarcity, terrorism and transnational crime, among others. He underscored the need to use the potentials to deliver tangibles emanating from BIMSTEC process, most importantly on connectivity, economic growth and energy for the prosperity and well-being of the people. He also proposed rationalization of existing areas of cooperation rather than expansion as the guiding norms with a view to correctly reflect the

spirit of BIMSTEC as enshrined in the Bangkok Declaration of 1997. He suggested to make BIMSTEC a hope for peoples of Bay of Bengal region. The full text of the Opening Remarks is at **Annex II**.

05. While delivering the Special Remarks, Ambassador M Shahidul Islam, Secretary General of BIMSTEC expressed his deep gratitude to the Government of Nepal for hosting this SOM. Referring to the founding objectives of BIMSTEC he mentioned that the organization has developed into a promising regional forum with significant success in setting up institutions, laying down legal framework, initiating project-based cooperation, facilitating capacity building and knowledge sharing and enhancing contacts and exchanges at various levels. He provided a brief account of progress since the 3rd BIMSTEC Summit, including the establishment of the BIMSTEC Secretariat as well as holding of the Goa Retreat, and expected that all the BIMSTEC centres and entities will be operationalized with the harmonization of their structure. Referring to the 16-point agenda of action as agreed by the Leaders at the Retreat, he highlighted few achievements including finalization of the drafts of three agreements, BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Master Plan and two meetings of BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs. He expressed hope that the 4th BIMSETC Summit would direct to- develop BIMSTEC Charter, formulate the Rules of Procedure for the BIMSTEC Mechanisms, establish BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee and explore the possibilities of establishing BIMSTEC Development Fund. The full text of the Special Remarks is at **Annex III**.

Agenda Item 02: Election of the Chairperson

06. As per the existing BIMSTEC practice, H.E. Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Nepal as the Head of Delegation of the host Member State was elected to chair the Meeting.

Agenda Item 03: Adoption of the Agenda

07. The Meeting considered and adopted the Agenda as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/01, which is at **Annex IV**.

Agenda Item 04: Report by the Secretary General on progress of BIMSTEC activities

08. The Meeting considered the Secretary General's Report on progress of BIMSTEC activities as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/02.

09. While noting the report of the Secretary General with deep appreciation and the progress made since the Special Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 11 August 2018, the leader of the delegation of **Bangladesh** emphasized more on sub-regional cooperation at the context of multilateralism which is under multiple challenges with the fast changing global scenario. Emblazing the untapped

potentials of BIMSTEC, he urged upon the member states to focus on the key areas like trade and investment cooperation and connectivity in the region as enshrined in the Bangkok Declaration of 1997 as fundamental mandate of BIMSTEC cooperation which are still remaining unimplemented. He mentioned that connectivity and peace, security and stability emerged as cross-cutting sectors of BIMSTEC. Referring BIMSTEC as a legal entity set up by the Member States, he stressed on the BIMSTEC legal instruments of which only seven have been concluded in 21 years, and 2 are under process while 14 of them still remained unsigned. Bangladesh delegation underscored the need to focus on the pending ones and called upon the member states to finalize them on a fast track basis. Stressing on the need for stability in the region as a precondition for economic and social progress, he expressed happiness that BIMSTEC Security cooperation is moving on the right direction and speed. Referring to both positive and disruptive impacts of technology, he expressed satisfaction at the progress of BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility but requested the Member States to be aware of the positive and disruptive impacts of technology. He made special mention of social media platform as a tool to enhance visibility of BIMSTEC.

10. The delegation of **Bhutan** mentioned that since Chair's statement and Secretary General's remarks covered most of the important aspects, the deliberations earlier will serve as a path and roadmap of the future BIMSTEC activities. He conveyed Bhutan's commitment in completing internal procedures for remaining legal instruments.

11. The delegation of **India** commended the Secretary General for producing the comprehensive report and reiterated India's support to the BIMSTEC Charter, BIMSTEC Rules of Procedures and the BIMSTEC Development Fund. While emphasizing regional connectivity and trade, he suggested that the BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Master Plan should move forward as planned and urged the Member States to agree on the dates for the next Meeting of the Trade Negotiation Committee (TNC).

12. The delegation of **Myanmar** lauded the Secretary General's comprehensive report and expressed support to the Chair's suggestion to re-grouping the areas of cooperation to produce tangible results. He mentioned that regional cooperation is very important for developing countries as BIMSTEC bridges South and Southeast Asia. He also suggested that BIMSTEC should not bring issues that might hamper organization's solidarity. He underscored the need for the Rules of Procedures as well as a Charter for a stronger BIMSTEC and suggested its focus on trade and investment. He expressed the commitment of Myanmar to follow the guidelines of the Leaders of the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit.

13. The delegation of **Nepal** expressed its view to have a dynamic BIMSTEC with renewed focus on all forms of connectivity, such as physical, digital and human connectivity as well as energy and technology sectors. While supporting the establishment of BIMSTEC Development Fund, he underscored the need for early finalization of the Rules of Procedures of the organization.

14. The delegation of **Sri Lanka** thanked the Secretary General for producing a realistic report as well as for recognizing the contributions made by the first Secretary General of BIMSTEC Mr. Sumith Nakandala of Sri Lanka. He reiterated Sri Lanka's commitment to strengthen the BIMSTEC Secretariat and supported the idea of rationalization of the sectors. He also supported the proposed BIMSTEC Charter, Rules of Procedure and the model MoA on the Establishment of BIMSTEC Centres/ Entities to harmonize the norms and procedures. He urged the Member States to redouble their efforts for promoting trade in the region.

15. The delegation of **Thailand** thanked the Chair for hosting the Summit and the Secretary General of BIMSTEC for preparing important documents for the Summit. Referring to Thailand's Concept Paper on Reprioritizing BIMSTEC Pillars of Cooperation, she emphasized on connectivity, both physical and people-to-people contact; trade and investment; counter-terrorism and transnational crime and science and technology. She underscored the need to convene the 21st Meeting of the TNC in order to finalize the pending agreements on Trade and Investment. She also supported the strengthening of BIMSTEC Secretariat, proposed BIMSTEC Charter and BIMSTEC Development Fund.

Agenda Item 05: Review of the progress since the Special Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting (S-SOM) held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 11 August 2018

16. The Meeting considered the Note by the Secretariat on progress achieved since the Special Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting (S-SOM) held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 11 August 2018 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/03 and noted the progress including the following:

- i. Nepal is at the final stage of the ratification process of BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking of 2009;
- ii. Bangladesh and Nepal have completed their internal procedure to sign the BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters;
- iii. All Member States have agreed to increase the number of Directors at the Secretariat to seven (7) on a staggered basis;
- iv. Bangladesh has conveyed their comments and observations on the draft Terms of Reference (ToR) of BIMSTEC Eminent Persons' Group (EPG), which was circulated by the Secretariat among the Member States on 24 August 2018;
- v. Sri Lanka has expressed their readiness to host the Fourth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Visa Matters;

- vi. All Member States have conveyed their concurrence to explore the possibility of establishing a BIMSTEC Development Fund (BDF).

Agenda Item 06: Consideration of the Reports of the Meetings held since Fifteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting

06.01. Report of the First Meeting of the Working Group on Customs Cooperation held in New Delhi, India on 10-11 May 2018

17. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the First Meeting of the Working Group on Customs Cooperation held in New Delhi, India on 10-11 May 2018 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/04 and endorsed the recommendations contained therein.

18. The Chair requested **Thailand** to convey their concurrence/comments and observations on the draft text of the BIMSTEC Agreement on Customs Cooperation to the Secretariat at the earliest possible.

06.02. Report of the Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Working Group (BTCWG) held in Bangkok on 13-14 November 2017

19. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Working Group (BTCWG) held in Bangkok on 13-14 November 2017 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/05 and endorsed the recommendations contained therein.

20. The Chair stated that First and Second Drafts of the BIMSTEC Master Plan on Connectivity have already been circulated and requested the Member States to expedite their views and comments on the Draft reports so that the Master Plan could be finalized within the stipulated timeframe *i.e.* September 2018.

06.03. Report of the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Coastal Shipping Agreement held in New Delhi, India on 27-28 November 2017

21. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Coastal Shipping Agreement held in New Delhi, India on 27-28 November 2017 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/06 and endorsed the recommendations contained therein.

22. The delegation of **India** requested the Member States to convey their views and comments on the draft text at the earliest to the Secretariat and also informed the Meeting that India is ready to host the Second Meeting of the Working Group after receipt of the comments from all the Member States.

06.04. Report of the First Meeting of the Working Group on BIMSTEC Motor Vehicle Agreement held in New Delhi on 09-10 April 2018

23. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the First Meeting of the Working Group on BIMSTEC Motor Vehicle Agreement held in New Delhi on 09-10 April 2018 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/07 and endorsed the recommendations contained therein.

24. The Chair informed that comments from the Member States, except Nepal and Sri Lanka, are awaited on the draft text of the Agreement. The delegation of Bangladesh updated the Meeting that they will convey their comments shortly to the Secretariat. The delegation of India informed that India is ready to host the Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Working Group on receipt of comments from all the Member States.

06.05. Report of the Fourth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on the Establishment of BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility(TTF) held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 21-22 November 2017

25. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the Fourth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on the Establishment of BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility (TTF) held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 21-22 November 2017 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/08 and endorsed the recommendations contained therein.

26. The Chair requested the remaining Member States to convey their concurrence/comments and observations on the finalized text as well as expeditiously complete their internal procedures in order to sign the MoA on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility. The delegation of Bangladesh informed that they are in the process of completing internal procedure to sign the MoA and suggested that the Secretariat visit the "Technology Bank/ Centre of Transfer of Technology" which has been operationalized in Ankara, Turkey once the text of the MoA on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC TTF is finalized.

06.06. Report of the Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 28 March 2018

27. The Meeting took note of the decisions outlined in the Report of the Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs (NSC) held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 28 March 2018 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/09 and endorsed the recommendations contained therein.

28. The delegation of **India** informed the Meeting that India is hoping to complete all activities mentioned in the Report of the 2nd Meeting of the NSC in Dhaka in this calendar year. The delegation of Bangladesh mentioned that the date of the Second BIMSTEC Track

1.5 Security Dialogue will be communicated soon. The delegation of Nepal stated that the concept of Himalayan Science Council needs clarity. The Delegation of Thailand stated that the Third NSC Meeting will be held in Thailand in March 2019.

06.07. Report of the Eighth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (JWG-CTTC) held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 13-14 August 2018

29. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the Eighth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (JWG-CTTC) held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 13-14 August 2018 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/10 and endorsed the recommendations contained therein including the revised Terms of References (ToR) of the BIMSTEC Sub-Group on Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursor Chemicals.

30. The Delegation of **Nepal** informed that the Fifth Meeting of the Sub Group on Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals was held on 23rd May 2018 at Kathmandu, Nepal, the Tenth Meeting of the Sub-Group on Anti Money Laundering and Combating Financing of Terrorism will be held on 27-28 September and the Eighth Meeting of the Sub-Group on Legal and Law Enforcement Issues will be held on 29-30 October 2018 at Kathmandu, Nepal.

31. The Delegation of **Thailand** informed that under the BIMSTEC Sub-Group on Legal and Law Enforcement Issues, Thailand is ready to discuss on the BIMSTEC Conventions on the Extradition and Transfer of Sentenced Persons (TSP). However, any discussion on this matter should start only after the finalization of the BIMSTEC Convention on Trafficking in Persons.

32. The delegation of **Bangladesh** reiterated its reservation that the title of the "BIMSTEC Sub-Group on Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration" need to be reconsidered as "BIMSTEC Sub-Group on Human Trafficking and Irregular Migration" with the consensus of the Member States. The Chair stated that the Member States are examining the issue and efforts will be made to develop consensus on the subject.

06.08. Report of the Sixth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Agricultural Cooperation held in Chiang Rai, Thailand on 12-16 December 2017

33. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the Sixth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Agricultural Cooperation held in Chiang Rai, Thailand on 12-16 December 2017 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/11 and endorsed the recommendations contained therein.

34. The delegation of **Myanmar** informed the Meeting that Myanmar will host the First Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture in 2019, after holding of the 7th Expert Group Meeting on Agriculture Cooperation in Bangladesh in 2018.

06.09. Report of the First BIMSTEC Experts Group Meeting on Poverty Alleviation (EGMPA) held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 01 November 2017

35. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the First BIMSTEC Experts Group Meeting on Poverty Alleviation (EGMPA) held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 01 November 2017 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/12 and endorsed the recommendations contained therein.

06.10. Report of the Third Meeting of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting on Poverty Alleviation held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 19 December 2017

36. The Meeting took note of the decisions outlined in the Report of the Third Meeting of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting on Poverty Alleviation held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 19 December 2017 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/13 and endorsed the recommendations contained therein.

06.11. Report of the Third BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 20 December 2017

37. The Meeting took note of the decisions outlined in the Report of the Third BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 20 December 2017 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/14 and endorsed the recommendations contained therein.

06.12. Report of the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Task Force on Traditional Medicine held in New Delhi, India on 24-25 October 2017

38. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Task Force on Traditional Medicine held in New Delhi, India on 24-25 October 2017 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/15 and endorsed the recommendations contained therein.

39. The delegation of **Thailand** informed the Meeting that Thailand is focusing on protection of genetic resources and associated Traditional Knowledge and Intellectual Property Rights and urged that the work of Task Force on Traditional Medicine should continue.

06.13. Report of the Special Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 05 April 2018

40. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the Special Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 05 April 2018 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/16 and endorsed the recommendations contained therein.

06.14. Report of the Eighth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 10 July 2018

41. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the Eighth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 10 July 2018 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/17 and endorsed the recommendations contained therein.

42. The delegation of **Thailand** agreed to raise the number of Directors to seven, one from each Member State, in a staggered manner and reiterated that the number of Directors should reflect the re-prioritization of the BIMSTEC areas of cooperation.

07. Consideration of the Secretariat's revised budget for FY 2017 and estimated budget for FY 2018

43. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Secretariat's revised budget for FY 2017 and budget for FY 2018 as recommended by the Special Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 05 April 2018, which are at **Annex V** and **Annex VI** respectively.

08. Consideration of the modalities for the procurement of a vehicle for the Secretariat

44. The Meeting noted the recommendation of the Special Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 05 April 2018 and accorded approval to the Secretariat to procure a new car through direct purchase within the ceiling of US\$ 30,000.00.

09. Finalization of the draft Provisional Agenda and the draft Report of the Sixteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting

45. The Meeting deliberated and finalized the draft Provisional Agenda of the Sixteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/20. The finalized draft Annotated Provisional Agenda, which is at **Annex VII** for consideration and adoption by the Sixteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting.

10. Finalization of the draft Provisional Agenda and draft Declaration of the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit

46. The Meeting deliberated extensively and finalized the draft Provisional Agenda and the revised draft Declaration of the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit as contained in the Secretariat's Document Numbers BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/22 and BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/23 respectively. The finalized draft Provisional Agenda and draft Declaration of the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit are at **Annex VIII** and **Annex IX** respectively, for consideration by the Sixteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting.

11. Status of BIMSTEC Agreements, MoUs and other Legal Instruments envisaged to be signed at the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit

47. The Meeting considered the Note by the Secretariat on Status of BIMSTEC Agreements, MoUs and other Legal Instruments envisaged to be signed at the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number BIMSTEC/SOM/19/2018/24 and recommended that as of now, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Establishment of the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection be signed at the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit. The details of the signatories of the MoU was conveyed to the Secretariat. The finalized draft text of the MoU is at **Annex X**.

12. Any Other Matters

48. No matter was raised under this Agenda Item.

13. Date and Venue of the Twentieth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting

49. The Meeting felt the necessity of holding the Twentieth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) at the earliest possible in order to implement the directives to be given by the Leaders of BIMSTEC at the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit. The time-frame will be circulated through the Secretariat in due course.

14. Consideration and Adoption of the Report of the Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting

50. The Meeting considered and adopted the draft Report of the Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting for submission to the Sixteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting to be held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 29 August 2018.

15. Closing of the Meeting

51. The Meeting conveyed its deep appreciation and gratitude to the Government of Nepal for extending warm hospitality and excellent arrangement made for the Meeting. The Chair thanked the Delegations for their valuable contributions and active participation. The Meeting also expressed appreciation to the Chair for his able stewardship in steering the Meeting.

52. The Meeting also expressed sincere thanks to the Secretary General and his team for their hard work and efforts in facilitating the Meeting to a successful conclusion.



BAY OF BENGAL INITIATIVE FOR MULTI-SECTORAL TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION



Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting
28 August 2018
Kathmandu, Nepal

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**Opening Remarks by
H.E. Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi, Foreign Secretary of Nepal at the
Nineteenth BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting
28 August 2018
Kathmandu, Nepal**

Distinguished Foreign Secretaries of the BIMSTEC Member States
His Excellency the Secretary General of BIMSTEC
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning and Namaskar!

At the outset, I would like to extend a warm welcome to you all at the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting. I am delighted to chair the Senior Official's Meeting for the fourth time in the span of two years. Our frequent meetings and constructive engagements demonstrate our strong commitment to the BIMSTEC process.

This meeting is being held in the context of the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit. We will be focusing basically on finalizing the agenda of the Sixteenth Ministerial Meeting as well as the agenda and draft declaration of the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit. In this context, this meeting is very important.

Distinguished Delegates,

BIMSTEC region has vast potentials and is full of opportunities but these opportunities are not free from challenges. Weaker connectivity, wide-spread poverty, food, water and energy scarcity, terrorism and trans-national crime are some of the major threats and challenges. Collective efforts are needed to address them.

We must acknowledge that our two-decade journey of regional collaboration has not marched to the potentials we have. To enable our Organization deliver tangible results, the identified agreed areas of cooperation should be rationalized with priority focus on economic sector and connectivity. Concentration rather than proliferation should be the guiding norms. Implementation, monitoring and follow-up mechanisms and institutions must be strengthened to this end.

Let me recall the Special Meeting that was held in Kathmandu two weeks ago. During that meeting we made a number of important decisions to revitalize the BIMSTEC process. I hope our decisions and recommendations will be endorsed by the higher bodies.

Economic growth, prosperity and wellbeing of our people remain on top of BIMSTEC agenda. We have to overcome the barriers that make us least integrated in the world.

Expeditious conclusion of all trade-related instruments is urgent for promoting intra-regional trade.

Connectivity is another vital area that needs our priority attention for making faster progress. Connectivity has a transformative power to achieve faster growth and prosperity in the region. I am pleased to note that a master plan on transport connectivity is being prepared. All dimensions of connectivity must be taken up in due course. At the same time, investment climate in the region has to be improved to facilitate financing in connectivity.

Technology is an important factor for accelerated development. With a view to promoting technological cooperation in the region, we call for completing the internal procedure by the remaining Member States to be able to sign the MoA on TTF at the earliest date.

Cooperation in the energy sector is in the interest of all Member States. I note with pleasure that the MoU on the Grid Interconnection will be signed during the Fourth Summit. I am confident that cooperation in energy will be a game changer in the regional cooperation through the exploitation of abundant energy potentials and promotion of clean energy trade. Our region is prone to challenges posed by climate change and natural disasters. We must collaborate to address them in a meaningful way.

Terrorism and transnational crimes are serious threats to regional peace and progress. We condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and reiterate our firm commitment to combating them resolutely at all levels. Early ratification of BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking and signing of BIMSTEC Convention on MLA will go a long way in this regard.

People -to- People contacts and tourism also deserve special attention.

I do not intend to speak at length on all our issues under agenda today. We will have the opportunity to discuss each of them when we take up specific agenda item for deliberation. At this point of time, I request for your active, constructive and valuable contribution in our deliberations.

Before I close, let me express my sincere appreciation to His Excellency Mr. M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General of BIMSTEC, and his team for the excellent preparation and documentation made for this meeting.

I wish all the distinguished delegates coming all the way from their respective capitals a pleasant, memorable and productive stay in Kathmandu.

With this, I conclude my remarks.

Thank You.

**Special Remarks of the Secretary General of BIMSTEC at the Nineteenth Session of the
BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting
28 August 2018
Kathmandu, Nepal**

His Excellency Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi, Foreign Secretary, Government of Nepal & the
Chair of 19th Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting;

Their Excellencies Leaders of Delegations to the 19th SOM;

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen:

Good morning.

01. It is my honour to address the 19th session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting, a body that recommended my appointment as the Secretary General of BIMSTEC one year ago. At the outset, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Government of Nepal for hosting this meeting and providing excellent logistical support and warm hospitality.

02. We are meeting at a time when BIMSTEC has gained considerable maturity as a regional organization. The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) was established through the adoption of Bangkok Declaration in 1997 with the "desire to establish a firm foundation for common action to promote sub-regional cooperation in the areas of trade, investment, technological exchange and other interrelated areas in a spirit of equality and partnership and thereby contribute towards peace, progress and prosperity in their common region". Over the years, BIMSTEC has developed into a promising regional forum with seven Member States that cooperate closely through 14 identified sectors of cooperation.¹ BIMSTEC has registered significant success in setting up institutions, laying down legal framework, initiating project-based cooperation, facilitating capacity building and knowledge sharing and enhancing contacts and exchanges at various levels to promote regional cooperation in the Bay of Bengal region. The Report of the Secretary General, which has been circulated among the Member States, provides a brief account of BIMSTEC's accomplishments in these areas since the holding of the Third BIMSTEC Summit on 4 March 2014 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, and the BIMSTEC Leaders' Retreat on 16 October 2016 in Goa, India.

¹Trade & Investment, Technology, Transportation and Communication, Energy, Tourism, Fisheries, Poverty Alleviation, Agriculture, Cultural Cooperation, Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crimes, Environment and Disaster Management, Public Health, People-to-People and Climate Change

03. The Third BIMSTEC Summit was an important milestone in developing BIMSTEC's institutional structure. The Summit witnessed the signing of three important legal instruments for the establishment of (a) BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat in Bangladesh; (b) BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory (BCIO) in Bhutan; and (c) BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate (BCWC) in India. The permanent Secretariat of BIMSTEC became operational in Dhaka, Bangladesh following its formal inauguration on 13 September 2014 by Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. The BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate (BCWC), located in Noida, India has been providing some of its services to BIMSTEC Member States through a web-portal. The Member States are now engaged in harmonizing the structure, governance, financing and reporting line of the existing and proposed BIMSTEC Centers. Once the harmonization process is completed, it is expected that the other specialized centers namely, BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory (BCIO) in Bhutan and BIMSTEC Energy Centre (BEC) in India will become operational. It is heartening to note that another specialized center the BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility (TTF) is in the process of being established in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

04. If the Third BIMSTEC Summit can be credited with its contribution to the institution building process of BIMSTEC, the BIMSTEC Leaders Retreat held in Goa, India on 16 October 2016 will be remembered for infusing fresh blood into the BIMSTEC process by way of reiterating our Leaders' political commitment to make the organization stronger, more effective and result-oriented. In addition to the Outcome Document, the Leaders of the BIMSTEC during their informal consultation at the Retreat agreed on a 16-point Agenda of Action, which set a result-oriented work plan aiming at completing the pending agreements and moving ahead with new initiatives. The 17th SOM held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 07 February 2017, the 18th SOM held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 10 August 2017 and the 15th Ministerial Meeting held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 11 August 2017 devoted considerable attention to review the progress made on the Agenda of Action in addition to the directives contained in the Goa Outcome Document. The status of progress made on the Agenda of Action is attached as Annex A to the Report of the Secretary General.

05. Some notable progress on the Agenda of Action includes progress made towards developing consensus on the drafts of three agreements, namely, Agreement on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Customs Matters, BIMSTEC Motor Vehicle Agreement and BIMSTEC Coastal Shipping Agreement. As regards the fast-tracking of BIMSTEC FTA negotiations as contained in the Agenda of Action, the new input provided recently by India on Product Specific Rules (PSR) has paved the way for resuming FTA negotiations, and Bangladesh, the Lead Country for Trade and Investment sector, is consulting Member States on an agreed date for holding the 21st meeting of the Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC).

06. Since the early days of BIMSTEC's existence, our Leaders have repeatedly emphasized the importance of connectivity as the prime mover of regional integration process. The ADB-assisted BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistics Study (BTILS) completed in 2014 is the first major initiative taken by the Member States to enhance transport connectivity. Most of the Member States have taken initiatives towards

implementation of projects identified by BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistics Study (BTILS). In pursuance of the directives of the Agenda of Action, the BIMSTEC Member States are currently developing the BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Master Plan with the target to complete it by the end of September 2018.

07. Another positive contribution of BIMSTEC is that it is serving as a forum for regular exchanges among policy makers and senior officials of the Governments of Member States, thereby narrowing down differences and creating common grounds for cooperation. Holding of 16 Ministerial Meetings and 19 Senior Officials' Meetings since the establishment of BIMSTEC demonstrate that the core meetings have attained a high degree of regularity. It is also heartening to see that since the Goa Retreat, BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs have met in March 2017 in New Delhi, in March 2018 in Dhaka and is scheduled to meet again in Bangkok in March 2019. However, the same cannot be said in case of all sectors if we consider that Trade and Economic Ministerial Meeting did not take place since 2004 and the Trade Negotiating Committee did not meet since 2015.

08. Mr. Chairman, until recently, BIMSTEC process was marked by a high degree of informality where past practices and norms were relied on in conducting business of institutional mechanisms, and meetings were held as per convenience and availability of host rather than exigencies of issues. It is heartening to see that the Fourth BIMSETC Summit is going to take a number of decisions to bring clarity and predictability in the BIMSTEC process by directing to develop BIMSTEC Charter, formulate the Rules of Procedure (RoP) for the BIMSTEC Mechanisms, establish BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee to deal with administrative and financial matters, and by directing to explore the possibilities of establishing a Development Fund to finance projects and studies.

09. The BIMSTEC Secretariat is fully functional with four Directors and required support staff working in a dedicated premise provided by the Government of Bangladesh. I would like to record our deep appreciation to the Government of Bangladesh, in particular the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for providing full support to the Secretariat in its functioning. I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Mr. Sumith Nakandala, the First Secretary General of BIMSTEC who contributed in laying down the basic norms and structures of the Secretariat. It is also encouraging to note that the Member States are considering to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Secretariat through providing required financial and human resources.

10. Mr. Chairman: Before I conclude, let me say that Nepal did a great job by holding the Special SOM on 11 August 2018 which took care of a number of issues that would otherwise have burdened the agenda of the 19th SOM. As a result, the number of items on the Agenda of the 19th SOM has considerably come down, which would allow this august meeting to concentrate more on the preparation for the Fourth Summit. The Secretariat remains at the disposal of the Chair for a successful meeting. Thank you.

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BAY OF BENGAL INITIATIVE FOR MULTI-SECTORAL TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION



Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting
28 August 2018
Kathmandu, Nepal

Agenda¹

ORGANIZATIONAL AND PROCEDURAL MATTERS

01. Opening of the Meeting
02. Election of the Chairperson
03. Adoption of the Agenda
04. Report by the Secretary General on progress of BIMSTEC activities

REPORTING ITEMS

05. Review of the progress since the Special Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting (S-SOM) held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 11 August 2018
06. Consideration of the Reports of the Meetings held since Fifteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting

Trade and Investment

- 06.01. Report of the First Meeting of the Working Group on Customs Cooperation held in New Delhi, India on 10-11 May 2018

Transport and Communications

- 06.02. Report of the Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Working Group (BTCWG) held in Bangkok on 13-14 November 2017

¹As adopted by the Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting on 28 August 2018

06.03. Report of the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Coastal Shipping Agreement held in New Delhi, India on 27-28 November 2017

06.04. Report of the First meeting of the Working Group on BIMSTEC Motor vehicle Agreement held in New Delhi on 09-10 April 2018

Technology

06.05. Report of the Fourth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on the Establishment of BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility (TTF) held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 21-22 November 2017

Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime

06.06. Report of the Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 28 March 2018

06.07. Report of the Eighth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (JWG-CTTC) held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 13-14 August 2018

Agriculture

06.08. Report of the Sixth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Agricultural Cooperation held in Chiang Rai, Thailand on 12-16 December 2017

Poverty Alleviation

06.09. Report of the First BIMSTEC Experts Group Meeting on Poverty Alleviation (EGMPA) held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 01 November 2017

06.10. Report of the Third Meeting of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting on Poverty Alleviation held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 19 December 2017

06.11. Report of the Third BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 20 December 2017

Public Health

06.12. Report of the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Task Force on Traditional Medicine held in New Delhi, India on 24-25 October 2017

Administrative and Financial Matters

06.13. Report of the Special Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 05 April 2018

- 06.14. Report of the Eighth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 10 July 2018

ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL ISSUES

07. Consideration of the Secretariat's revised budget for FY 2017 and estimated budget for FY 2018
08. Consideration of the modalities for the procurement of a vehicle for the Secretariat

PREPARATION FOR THE FOURTH BIMSTEC SUMMIT

09. Finalization of the draft Provisional Agenda and the draft Report of the Sixteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting
10. Finalization of the draft Provisional Agenda and draft Declaration of the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit
11. Status of BIMSTEC Agreements, MoUs and other Legal Instruments envisaged to be signed at the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit

OTHER ISSUES

12. Any Other Matters
13. Date and Venue of the Twentieth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting

REPORT ADOPTION

14. Consideration and Adoption of the Report of the Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting

CLOSING OF THE MEETING

15. Closing of the Meeting

Revised Budget for BIMSTEC Secretariat for the Fiscal Year 2017¹

Object Code	Sub Object Code	Category / Object Title	Approved budget for the year of 2017	Expenditure in the year of 2017 (Revised Budget)	Balance	Remarks
		RECURRENT EXPENDITURE	\$ USD	\$ USD	\$ USD	
1000		Personal Emoluments				
1001	100101	Salaries and Wages	360,000.00	270,368.66	89,631.34	
	100102	Overtime and Holiday Pay	5,000.00	4,769.40	230.60	
1003		Other Allowances				
	100301	Representational Allowance	30,000.00	28,400.00	1,600.00	
	100302	Educational Allowance	125,000.00	70,089.25	54,910.75	
	100303	Medical Allowance	28,000.00	24,339.43	3,660.57	
	100304	Festival Allowance	5,000.00	2,451.00	2,549.00	
	100305	Conveyance Allowance	6,000.00	5,574.82	425.18	
	100306	Housing Allowance	25,000.00	22,172.95	2,827.05	
	100307	Travelling Allowance	3,000.00	4,796.36	-1,796.36	
	100308	Residential Telephone Allowance	2,000.00	763.30	1,236.70	
	100309	Liveries Allowance	3,000.00	237.26	2,762.74	
	100310	Transfer Grant	8,000.00	6,250.00	1,750.00	
	100311	Internet/Data Allowance	4,000.00	2,950.73	1,049.27	
1101		Traveling Expenses				
	110101	Air Fare	40,000.00	41,651.15	-1,651.15	
	110102	Combined and Incidental Expenses	40,000.00	44,114.83	-4,114.83	
	110103	Transport of Personal Effects	20,000.00	9,151.34	10,848.66	
	110104	Transport of Vehicle	3,000.00	1,500.00	1,500.00	
	110105	Children's Educational Passage	2,000.00	615.97	1,384.03	
	110106	Emergency Passage	3,500.00	1,215.37	2,284.63	
	110107	Emergency Medical Passage	4,000.00	-	4,000.00	
	110108	Home Leave Passage	-	-	-	
1201		Supplies				
	120101	Stationary and Office Requisites	6,000.00	6,411.99	-411.99	
	120102	News Papers, Magazines and Journals	1,000.00	967.80	32.20	
	120103	Fuel and Lubricants	8,000.00	8,480.78	-480.78	
1301		Maintenance Expenditure for Vehicles				
	130101	Servicing and maintenance of Secretariat vehicles	4,000.00	5,068.61	-1,068.61	
	130102	Insurance Premium	2,500.00	1,421.52	1,078.48	
1302		Maintenance of Buildings and Capital Assets				
	130201	Repair and maintenance (R & M) of Building	4,000.00	5,492.86	-1,492.86	

¹The Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 28 August 2018 considered and endorsed the Secretariat's revised Budget for FY-2017 as recommended by the Special Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 05 April 2018.

1401		Communication Services				
	140101	Telecommunications (office Phone)	1,500.00	942.77	557.23	
	140102	Postal and Courier Charges	500.00	207.59	292.41	
	140103	ICT Related Expenses	3,500.00	3,129.89	370.11	
	140104	Maintenance and Hosting of Website	3,500.00	2,442.98	1,057.02	
1402		Hire Charges (Others)				
	140201	Hire Charges of handyman	500.00	288.60	211.4	
1403		Electricity and Water				
	140301	Electricity	9,000.00	7,966.06	1,033.94	
	140302	Water	1,000.00	323.16	676.84	
	140303	Gas	200.00	-	200.00	
1404		Rents				
	140401	Rents	60,000.00	44,100.00	15,900.00	
	140402	House Furnishing Grants	11,000.00	-	11,000.00	
1405		Other Services				
	140501	Bank Charges	100.00	-	100.00	
	140502	Security Expenses	4,800.00	41.71	4,758.29	
	140503	Water Purification System	200.00	92.90	107.10	
	140504	Others/Miscellaneous	10,000.00	7,773.12	2,226.88	
1501		Servicing of Meetings				
	150101	Meetings and Events by the Secretariat	2,000.00	782.29	1,217.71	
	150102	BIMSTEC Day Celebration (special Occasion)	5,000.00	4,556.83	443.17	
1601		Publications and Outreach				
	160101	Publications by the Secretariat	1,500.00	-	1,500.00	
	160102	Outreach and Awareness Programs	4,000.00	346.08	3,653.92	
	160103	20 th Celebration of BIMSTEC	15,000.00	5,284.00	9,716.00	
	160104	Cost of Engaging experts/specialists for preparation of studies/reports	-	-	-	
	160105	Honorarium for the seminars/ meetings	-	-	-	
	160106	Honorarium for Interns	-	-	-	
Total (USD)			875,300.00	647,533.36	227,766.64	
Contingencies 5% of the total recurrent			43,765.00	-	43,765.00	
Grant Total			919,065.00	647,533.36	271,531.64	

Budget for BIMSTEC Secretariat for the Fiscal Year 2018¹

Object Code	Sub Object Code	Category / Object Title	Estimated Budget for the year of 2018	Remarks
		RECURRENT EXPENDITURE	\$ USD	
1000		Personal Emoluments		
1001	100101	Salaries and Wages	400,000.00	
	100102	Overtime and Holiday Pay	7,000.00	
1003		Other Allowances		
	100301	Representational Allowance	43,200.00	
	100302	Educational Allowance	133,500.00	
	100303	Medical Allowance	38,000.00	
	100304	Festival Allowance	6,500.00	
	100305	Conveyance Allowance	10,000.00	
	100306	Housing Allowance	37,500.00	
	100307	Travelling Allowance	8,000.00	
	100308	Residential Telephone Allowance	4,000.00	
	100309	Liveries Allowance	3,000.00	
	100310	Transfer Grant	10,000.00	
	100311	Internet/Data Allowance	4,900.00	
1101		Traveling Expenses		
	110101	Air Fare	55,000.00	
	110102	Combined and Incidental Expenses	50,000.00	
	110103	Transport of Personal Effects	20,000.00	
	110104	Transport of Vehicle	4,500.00	
	110105	Children's Educational Passage	2,000.00	
	110106	Emergency Passage	3,500.00	
	110107	Emergency Medical Passage	4,000.00	
	110108	Home Leave Passage	6,000.00	
1201		Supplies		
	120101	Stationary and Office Requisites	8,000.00	
	120102	News Papers, Magazines and Journals	1,400.00	
	120103	Fuel and Lubricants	12,000.00	
1301		Maintenance Expenditure for Vehicles		
	130101	Servicing and maintenance of Secretariat vehicles	6,000.00	
	130102	Insurance Premium	2,500.00	
1302		Maintenance of Buildings and Capital Assets		
	130201	Repair and maintenance (R & M) of Building	8,000.00	

¹The Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 28 August 2018 considered and endorsed the Secretariat's Budget for FY-2018 as recommended by the Special Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 05 April 2018.

1401		Communication Services		
	140101	Telecommunications (office Phone)	1,500.00	
	140102	Postal and Courier Charges	500.00	
	140103	ICT Related Expenses	3,500.00	
	140104	Maintenance and Hosting of Website	3,000.00	
1402		Hire Charges (Others)		
	140201	Hire Charges of handyman	1,000.00	
1403		Electricity and Water		
	140301	Electricity	9,500.00	
	140302	Water	3,000.00	
	140303	Gas	600.00	
1404		Rents		
	140401	Rents	90,000.00	
	140402	House Furnishing Grants	11,000.00	
1405		Other Services		
	140501	Bank Charges	100.00	
	140502	Security Expenses	4,800.00	
	140503	Water Purification System	200.00	
	140504	Others/Miscellaneous	12,000.00	
1501		Servicing of Meetings		
	150101	Meetings and Events by the Secretariat	2,000.00	
	150102	BIMSTEC Day Celebration (special Occasion)	7,000.00	
1601		Publications and Outreach		
	160101	Publications by the Secretariat	1,500.00	
	160102	Outreach and Awareness Programs	4,000.00	
	160103	20 th Celebration of BIMSTEC	15,000.00	
	160104	Cost of Engaging experts/specialists for preparation of studies/reports	0.00	
	160105	Honorarium for the seminars/ meetings	5,000.00	
	160106	Honorarium for Interns	4,500.00	
1701		Procurement of capital items		
	170101	Procurement of vehicle	30,000.00	
Total (USD)			1,098,200.00	
Contingencies 5% of the total recurrent			54,910.00	
Grant Total			1,153,110.00	



BAY OF BENGAL INITIATIVE FOR MULTI-SECTORAL TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION



Sixteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting

29 August 2018

Kathmandu, Nepal

Finalized Draft Annotated Provisional Agenda¹

The present document contains the Draft Provisional Agenda for the Sixteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting [Section I] and Annotations to the Draft Provisional Agenda [Section II].

Section I Draft Provisional Agenda

01. Opening and welcome Statement by the Hon'ble Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal
02. Election of the Chairperson of the Meeting
03. Adoption of the Agenda
04. Statements by the Leaders of the Delegations:
 - 4.1 Bangladesh
 - 4.2 Bhutan
 - 4.3 India
 - 4.4 Myanmar
 - 4.5 Nepal
 - 4.6 Sri Lanka
 - 4.7 Thailand
05. Report by the Secretary General of BIMSTEC
06. Briefing on the preparations for the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit
07. Consideration and adoption of the Report of the Special Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 11 August 2018

¹The Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 28 August 2018 finalized draft Annotated Provisional Agenda for consideration and adoption by the Sixteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting.

08. Consideration and adoption of the Report of the Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting to be held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 28 August 2018
09. Finalization of BIMSTEC Convention/MoU ready for signature
10. Finalization of the draft of the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit Declaration
11. Any Other Matters
12. Date and Venue of the Seventeenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting
13. Consideration and Adoption of the Report of the Sixteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting
14. Handover of the Chairmanship of BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting
15. Closing Remarks by the Hon'ble Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal

Section II Draft Annotated Provisional Agenda

01. Opening and welcome Statement by the Hon'ble Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal

Opening and welcome Statement will be delivered by by Hon'ble Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal.

02. Election of the Chairperson of the Meeting

As per the existing practice, the Head of Delegation of the Member State hosting the Meeting *i.e.*, Nepal will be elected as the Chairperson of the Meeting. Upon assuming the Chair, the Chairperson will make initial remarks, including matters pertaining to the conduct of the Meeting.

03. Adoption of the Agenda

The Meeting may consider and adopt the Agenda as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/MM/16/2018/01/Rev.2.**

04. Statements by the Leaders of the Delegations:

Honourable Ministers of External Affairs/Foreign Affairs of the Member States will deliver their statements in the following alphabetical order:

4.1 Bangladesh

4.2 Bhutan

4.3 India

4.4 Myanmar

4.5 Nepal

4.6 Sri Lanka

4.7 Thailand

05. Report by the Secretary General of BIMSTEC

The Report would be presented by the Secretary General of BIMSTEC, which is contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/MM/16/2018/02.**

06. Briefing on the preparations for the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit

The Delegation of Nepal will brief the Meeting on the preparations for the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit.

07. Consideration and adoption of the Report of the Special Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 11 August 2018

The Meeting may consider and adopt the Report of the Special Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 11 August 2018 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/MM/16/2018/03.**

08. Consideration and adoption of the Report of the Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting to be held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 28 August 2018

The Meeting may consider and adopt the Report of the Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting to be held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 28 August 2018.

09. Finalization of BIMSTEC Convention/MoU ready for signature

The Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting to be held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 28 August 2018 will deliberate on this

Agenda Item and recommend the BIMSTEC Convention/MoU for signature at the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit.

The Meeting may consider the recommendation of the 19th Session of the SOM and finalize the BIMSTEC Convention/MoU ready for signature.

10. Finalization of the draft of the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit Declaration

The Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting to be held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 28 August 2018 will update the draft text of the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit Declaration.

The Meeting may consider the recommendation of the 19th Session of the SOM and finalize the draft of the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit Declaration.

11. Any Other Matters

Any other matters raised by Delegations and/or by the Secretariat will be considered under this Agenda Item.

12. Date and Venue of the Seventeenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting

The Meeting may suggest a suitable time-frame for holding of the Seventeenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting.

13. Consideration and Adoption of the Report of the Sixteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting

The Meeting may consider and adopt the Report of the Sixteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting.

14. Handover of the Chairmanship of BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting

The current of Chair of the BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting, *i.e.*, Nepal will handover of the Chairmanship of BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting to the next Chair, *i.e.*, Sri Lanka.

15. Closing Remarks by the Hon'ble Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal

Closing Remarks will be delivered by the Hon'ble Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal.



BAY OF BENGAL INITIATIVE FOR MULTI-SECTORAL TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION



Fourth BIMSTEC Summit

30-31 August 2018

Kathmandu, Nepal

Finalized Draft Annotated Provisional Agenda¹

The present document contains the Draft Provisional Agenda for the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit [Section I] and Annotations to the Draft Provisional Agenda [Section II].

Section I Draft Provisional Agenda

1. Opening of the Summit and Welcome Address by the Chairperson/
Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister of Nepal
2. Adoption of the Agenda
3. Statements by the Leaders of Delegation in alphabetical order:
 - 3.1 Bangladesh
 - 3.2 Bhutan
 - 3.3 India
 - 3.4 Myanmar
 - 3.5 Sri Lanka
 - 3.6 Thailand
4. Consideration of the Joint Statement of the 15th BIMSTEC
Ministerial Meeting and the Report of the 16th BIMSTEC Ministerial
Meeting

¹The Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 28 August 2018 finalized draft Annotated Provisional Agenda of the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit for consideration by the Sixteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting.

5. Report by the Secretary General of BIMSTEC
6. Witnessing of the Signing Ceremony for BIMSTEC MoU
7. Adoption of the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit Declaration
8. Any Other Business
9. Handover of BIMSTEC Chairmanship
10. Closing Remarks by the Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister of Nepal

Section II Annotations to the Draft Provisional Agenda

1. **Opening of the Summit and Welcome Address by the Chairperson/ Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister of Nepal**

The Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister of Nepal will open the Summit and deliver Welcome Address.

2. **Adoption of the Agenda**

The Summit may consider and adopt the Agenda as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number BIMSTEC/Summit/04/2018/01/Rev.2.

3. **Statements by the Leaders of Delegation in alphabetical order:**

The Hon'ble Leaders of Delegation will deliver their statements in the following alphabetical order:

3.1 Bangladesh

3.2 Bhutan

3.3 India

3.4 Myanmar

3.5 Sri Lanka

3.6 Thailand

4. **Consideration of the Joint Statement of the 15th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting and the Report of the 16th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting**

The Summit may consider and adopt the Joint Statement of the Fifteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 11 August 2017 and also the Report of the Sixteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 29 August 2018 as contained in the Secretariat's Documents Number BIMSTEC/Summit/04/2018/02 and BIMSTEC/Summit/04/2018/03 respectively.

5. **Report by the Secretary General of BIMSTEC**

The Report would be presented by the Secretary General of BIMSTEC.

6. **Witnessing of the Signing Ceremony for BIMSTEC MoU**

The Leaders may like to witness the Signing Ceremony for BIMSTEC MoU.

7. **Adoption of the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit Declaration**

The Leaders may adopt the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit Declaration as recommended by the Sixteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting.

8. **Any Other Business**

Any other matters raised by the Leaders of BIMSTEC will be considered under this Agenda Item.

9. **Handover of BIMSTEC Chairmanship**

The current Chair of the BIMSTEC *i.e.*, Nepal will hand over the BIMSTEC Chairmanship to the next Chair, *i.e.*, Sri Lanka. The Leader of the Delegation of Sri Lanka may wish to make a short statement after taking over of Chairmanship of BIMSTEC.

10. **Closing Remarks by the Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister of Nepal**

The Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister of Nepal will make closing Remarks at the conclusion of the Summit.



BAY OF BENGAL INITIATIVE FOR MULTI-SECTORAL TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION



Draft of the FOURTH BIMSTEC SUMMIT DECLARATION¹

30-31 August 2018

Kathmandu, Nepal

“Towards a Peaceful, Prosperous and Sustainable Bay of Bengal Region”

We, the Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, the Chief Advisor of the Kingdom of Bhutan, the Prime Minister of the Republic of India, the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Prime Minister of Nepal, the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand, met in Kathmandu on 30-31 August 2018 for the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit; and

Reaffirming the firm commitment to the principles and purposes of BIMSTEC as enshrined in the 1997 Bangkok Declaration;

Recalling the Third BIMSTEC Summit Declaration (Nay Pyi Taw, 4 March 2014) and the BIMSTEC Leaders’ Retreat Outcome Document (Goa, 16 October 2016);

Affirming the solemn commitment to making the Bay of Bengal Region peaceful, prosperous and sustainable by building on our common strengths through our collective efforts;

Being convinced that geographical contiguity, abundant natural and human resources, rich historical linkages and cultural heritage present great potentials for promoting deeper cooperation in identified core areas in the region;

Recognizing that eradication of poverty is the greatest regional challenge in realization of development objectives and expressing firm commitment to working together for the implementation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development;

Acknowledging that enhanced inter-linkages and inter-dependence within the economies and societies in the BIMSTEC Member States provide greater opportunity to advance regional cooperation;

¹The Nineteenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials’ Meeting held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 28 August 2018 finalized draft of the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit Declaration for consideration by the Sixteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting.

Underlining the importance of multidimensional connectivity, which promotes synergy among connectivity frameworks in our region, as a key enabler to economic integration for shared prosperity;

Taking into consideration the importance of trade and investment as one of the major contributing factors for fostering economic and social development in the region.

Recognizing the special needs and circumstances of the least developed and land-locked developing countries in the region and underlining the necessity to provide meaningful support to their development process;

Recognizing that terrorism and transnational organized crimes continue to pose a great threat to international peace and security including in the BIMSTEC countries and stressing that combating terrorism and transnational organized crimes require sustained efforts and cooperation and comprehensive approach involving active participation and collaboration of the Member States;

Reaffirming strong commitment to making BIMSTEC a dynamic, effective and result-oriented regional organization for promoting a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Bay of Bengal Region through meaningful cooperation and deeper integration;

Stressing the need for a fair, just, rule-based, equitable and transparent international order and reaffirming faith in the multilateralism with the United Nations at the centre and the rule-based international trading system;

Underscoring the importance of robust institutional arrangements to effectively steering the process of regional cooperation under BIMSTEC;

Taking Note of the participation and concurrence by the Chief Advisor of the Interim Government of Bhutan to the Summit decisions and its outcome documents on an ad referendum basis, as these are subject to endorsement by the next elected government;

Do hereby:

1. *Recall* the principles enshrined in the 1997 Bangkok Declaration and reemphasize that cooperation within BIMSTEC will be based on respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in internal affairs, peaceful co-existence and mutual benefit.
2. *Agree* to intensify our efforts to realize the objectives and purposes of BIMSTEC as embodied in the 1997 Bangkok Declaration, and reiterate our pledge to work collectively towards making BIMSTEC a stronger, more effective and result-oriented organization for achieving a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Bay of Bengal Region.

3. *Resolve* to achieve, leveraging on BIMSTEC's unique position as a bridge linking South and Southeast Asia, an enhanced level of economic and social development in the region, and remain fully committed to consolidate and deepen cooperation among Member States towards transforming our organization into an effective platform to promote peace, prosperity and sustainability.
4. *Deplore* terrorist attacks in all parts of the world including in BIMSTEC countries and strongly condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations wherever and by whomsoever committed and stress that there can be no justification whatsoever for any act of terrorism. *Affirm* that the fight against terrorism should target not only terrorists, terror organizations and networks but also identify and hold accountable States and non-State entities that encourage, support or finance terrorism, provide sanctuaries to terrorists and terror groups and falsely extol their virtues. *Reiterate* our strong commitment to combat terrorism and call upon all countries to devise a comprehensive approach in this regard which should include preventing financing of terrorists and terrorist actions from territories under their control, blocking recruitment and cross-border movement of terrorists, countering radicalization, countering misuse of internet for purposes of terrorism and dismantling terrorist safe havens.
5. Repose our faith unequivocally in the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and strive to strengthen the multilateral system by reforming its rules, institutions and instruments to make it relevant to contemporary global challenges and agree to work together to present a collective voice to safeguard our collective interests for a fair, just, rule-based, equitable and transparent world order.

INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

6. *Decide* to task the BIMSTEC Secretariat to prepare a preliminary draft of the charter for the organization, building on the 1997 Bangkok Declaration, defining a long-term vision and priorities for cooperation, clearly delineating roles and responsibilities of different layers of institutional structure and decision-making processes, for consideration by the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC) and other higher bodies with a view to adopting it by the Fifth Summit; and agree to task the BPWC to develop the Rules of Procedure (RoP) for the BIMSTEC Mechanisms.
7. *Decide* to establish a BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee to deal with administrative and financial matters of the Secretariat and the BIMSTEC Centers and Entities, as well as to prepare schedule of meetings, prioritize and rationalize the organization's activities.
8. *Direct* the relevant Ministries/national agencies of our respective governments to explore the possibility of establishing a BIMSTEC Development Fund (BDF), at an appropriate time, with voluntary contributions from the Member States, which will be utilized for research and planning of BIMSTEC and financing of projects, programmes and other activities of BIMSTEC Centers and Entities as agreed upon by the Member States.

9. *Agree* to enhance the institutional capacity of the BIMSTEC Secretariat, including through financial and human resources, in order to enable it to coordinate, monitor and facilitate implementation of BIMSTEC activities and programmes; and initiate project proposals as agreed by the Member States as well as fulfil any other responsibility entrusted to it in an effective and efficient manner and agree to raise the numbers of Directors to seven, one from each Member State, in a staggered manner.
10. *Acknowledge* the importance of enhancing the visibility and stature of BIMSTEC in international fora by, *inter alia*, forging common positions, as appropriate, on issues of common interest and seeking group recognition in various multilateral organizations, institutions and processes.
11. *Emphasize* the need to accelerate progress in the core areas of cooperation and to *review*, restructure and rationalize the existing areas of BIMSTEC cooperation and streamline the operational modalities for activities, implementation of programmes and projects under BIMSTEC for bringing out tangible results. Welcome Thailand's concept paper on the Reprioritization of BIMSTEC Pillars of Cooperation proposing to streamline to five pillars which will be subjected to further discussion in the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee.
12. *Agree* to take up on priority basis the legal documents and instruments that are pending for internal approval process for finalization and ratification.
13. *Commend* the role of Lead Countries for the progress made in the respective sectors, as annexed to this declaration, and encourage them to accelerate their efforts to make further progress.
14. *Express* our appreciation for former Secretary-General Mr. Sumith Nakandala's valuable contribution in advancing the work of BIMSTEC during his tenure and welcome the appointment of Mr. M. Shahidul Islam of Bangladesh as the Secretary General of BIMSTEC.
15. *Convey* deep appreciation to Nepal for the able stewardship of BIMSTEC from March 2014 and welcome Sri Lanka as the new Chair of BIMSTEC.
16. *Reiterate* the commitment to timely holding of Summit and other meetings of the BIMSTEC mechanisms to intensify the process of regional cooperation.
17. *Agree* to make our directives, commitments and statements of our positions on sectoral review expressed at the Annexure as part of this Declaration.
18. *Express* our sincere appreciation to the Government of Nepal for the warm hospitality and the excellent arrangements made for the Summit.

Annex to the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit Declaration

Sectoral Review

Poverty Alleviation

1. *Reiterate* our commitment to the eradication poverty in the Bay of Bengal Region by 2030 in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and call for effective implementation of the BIMSTEC Poverty Plan of Action and for gearing up efforts of all sectors to contribute to the over-arching goal of poverty alleviation.
2. *Express* commitment to nurturing our workforce by taking concrete measures to provide decent job opportunities for them through increased investment in service and productive sectors of national economy.

Transport and Communications (Connectivity)

3. *Reiterate* our 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, airways in the region and direct our respective 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. *Note* with satisfaction the preparation of the draft BIMSTEC Master Plan on Transport Connectivity and call for its early adoption and thank the Asian Development Bank for providing support to prepare the Master Plan and task 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. We agree that the Master Plan would serve as a strategic document that guides actions and promotes synergy among various connectivity frameworks, such as the ASEAN Master Plan on Connectivity 2025 (MPAC 2025), the Ayeyawady - Chao Phraya- Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS), to achieve enhanced connectivity and sustainable development in our region.
5. *Decide* to establish a Working Group to deal with information technology and communications related matters with a view to provide greater access, more affordable and high-speed internet and mobile communications to the peoples of the region. In this regard, we welcome the offer of the Government of India to host a BIMSTEC Ministerial Conclave at the India Mobile Congress 2018 being held in New Delhi from 25-27 October 2018 on the theme “New Digital Horizons: Connect, Create, Innovate”, and encourage all Member States to participate in it.

Trade and Investment

6. *Renew* our commitment to an early conclusion of BIMSTEC Free Trade Area (FTA) negotiations, and direct the BIMSTEC Trade and Economic Ministerial Meeting (TEMM) and its subsidiary bodies including the Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC) to expedite finalization of all related Agreements of the BIMSTEC FTA as early as possible; and express our satisfaction on the progress of negotiation on the Agreement on Trade in Goods and the Agreement on Customs Cooperation and also direct our respective Ministries/Agencies to participate regularly in TNC Meetings.
7. *Agree* to revitalize the activities of BIMSTEC Business Forum and BIMSTEC Economic Forum to further strengthen Government–Private sector cooperation for the promotion of trade and investment and task the Expert Group on BIMSTEC Visa Matters to continue negotiation for finalization of the modalities for the BIMSTEC Visa Facilitation.
8. *Welcome* the offer of India to host a BIMSTEC Startup Conclave in December 2018, and encourage all Member States to participate in it.

Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime

9. *Reiterate* our position that terrorism continues to pose a serious threat to peace and stability in our region and reaffirm our strong commitment to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and agree to taking appropriate measures in this regard.
10. *Look forward* to the signing of the BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters; call upon the Member States for its early ratification and express satisfaction that many Member States have ratified the BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking and call upon the remaining Member State to do so.
11. *Express* our determination to strengthen cooperation and coordination among the law enforcement, intelligence and security agencies; and decide to hold meetings at the level of BIMSTEC Home Ministers and continue with the BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs meetings as part of promoting cooperation and coordination on counter terrorism and transnational crimes.
12. *Welcome* the offer of Thailand to host the Third Meeting of the BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs in March 2019.

Environment and Disaster Management

13. *Encourage* closer cooperation in disaster management through sharing of information, including early warning system, adoption of preventive measures, rehabilitation and capacity building and agree to build on the existing capacities in the region and decide to

establish an Inter-governmental Expert Group to develop a plan of action to improve preparedness and coordination for responding to natural disasters in the Bay of Bengal Region.

Climate Change

14. *Express* our serious concerns over environmental degradation, adverse impact of climate change and global warming on the fragile Himalayan and mountain eco-systems and their inter-linkages with the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean and resolve to strengthen cooperation to protect and preserve the environment to address, *inter alia*, the adverse impact of climate change on the lives and livelihoods of our peoples; explore the possibility to establish an Inter-governmental Expert Group to develop a plan of action for collective response to climate change for the region; reaffirm our commitments to operationalize the Paris Agreement, in accordance with principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR & RC), taking into account different national circumstances and equity.

Energy

15. *Recognize* the high potentials of energy resources in the region, particularly renewable and clean energy sources, and agree to expedite our efforts to develop a comprehensive plan for energy cooperation by working closely with each other within the region and decide to constitute an intergovernmental group of experts to enhance energy cooperation including in hydro-power and other sources of renewable energy.
16. *Remain* committed to providing uninterrupted and affordable power supply for the economic development of our peoples, including through energy trade; welcome the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection and instruct the relevant agencies to take concrete measures to initiate harmonization of technical, planning and operational standards for removing barriers to grid interconnections and also ensure early establishment of a BIMSTEC Grid and call for an early operationalization of the BIMSTEC Energy Centre in order to strengthen energy cooperation in the region.

Technology

17. *Agree* to enhance cooperation for development, access and sharing of affordable technologies – including for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises for promoting sustainable development across sectors and welcome the efforts of the Member States towards the signing of the Memorandum of Association on the Establishment of BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility in Sri Lanka.

18. *Also agree* to focus cooperation in human resources development and education for the advancement of technology in the region, keeping in mind the need to address the disruptive impacts of technology

Agriculture

19. *Decide* to deepen cooperation in the agricultural and allied sectors, including crops, livestock and horticulture, farm machinery and harvest management so as to increase productivity and profitability of agricultural produce in a sustainable manner; task the relevant authorities to intensify cooperation to attain food and nutritional security; and preserve and promote knowledge about traditional farming by appropriately linking both traditional and modern farming, and reducing costs, enhancing income and mitigating risks for farming communities, with the objective of facilitating agricultural trade among member countries and making contribution to the poverty alleviation, job creation, and improvement of quality of life of the masses in our nations.
20. *Welcome* the offer of Myanmar to host the 1st BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture by 2019 and the offer of India to host the BIMSTEC Seminar on Climate Smart Farming Systems in 2019.

Fisheries

21. *Stress* on continued cooperation in conservation, management and sustainable use of marine resources in the region; agree to deepen cooperation in fisheries to ensure food security and improve livelihoods of people in our region and task the relevant national agencies to explore the possibility of meaningful collaboration to promote sustainable marine fisheries and direct the relevant authorities to explore how the landlocked Member States can benefit from inland fisheries.

Public Health

22. *Agree* to expand cooperation in our efforts to address non-communicable diseases as well as trans-national public health issues that threaten the economic and social progress of the peoples of BIMSTEC region, including HIV and AIDS, malaria, dengue, tuberculosis, viral influenza-including avian and swine influenza and other emerging public health threats; note the progress in traditional medicine cooperation; remain committed to continuing the collaborative activities in this field; encourage active cooperation among concerned agencies including in the area of traditional medicine through exchange of information, sharing of experience, training of personnel and other concrete programmes to prevent and contain them; and express appreciation to Thailand for their efforts for cooperation in traditional medicine.

People-to-People Contacts

23. *Resolve* to build a deeper understanding and trust among Member States and promote people-to-people contacts at various levels; note with satisfaction the activities of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (BNPTT) in enhancing public awareness about BIMSTEC and direct the relevant agencies to finalize the terms of reference (ToR) of BNPTT.
24. *Agree* to explore possibility of establishing appropriate BIMSTEC forums for parliamentarians, universities, academia, research institutes, cultural organizations and media community to expand the scope of people-to-people contacts.

Cultural Cooperation

25. *Emphasize* the need to enhance cultural exchange among Member States to further strengthen the historic cultural ties among our peoples; promote mutual respect and tolerance for cultural diversity; underscore the importance of Buddhism as a connecting thread in the region; and remain committed to giving a clear manifestation to this by establishing a Buddhist Circuit.
26. *Agree* to hold meetings of BIMSTEC Cultural Ministers and BIMSTEC Cultural Festival at regular intervals; welcome the offer of Bangladesh to hold the 2nd BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Culture and 1st BIMSTEC Cultural Festival; and strongly encourage our respective Cultural Ministers to participate in these two important events.

Tourism

27. *Agree* to take concrete steps to promote intra-BIMSTEC tourism; task the relevant authorities to devise strategies considering the emerging opportunities and building on the past initiatives including the “Plan of Action for Tourism Development and Promotion for the BIMSTEC Region” adopted in Kolkata in 2005 and reinforced by the 2nd BIMSTEC Tourism Ministers Round Table and Workshop in Kathmandu in 2006; agree to take concrete measures to facilitate tourism by ensuring safety and security of tourists, and smooth transport connectivity; reaffirm our commitment to developing and promoting Buddhist Tourist Circuit, Temple Tourist Circuit, ancient cities trail, eco-tourism and medical tourism; and welcome the offer of Nepal to host a BIMSTEC tourism conclave in Nepal in 2020, coinciding with the Visit Nepal Year 2020.

Mountain Economy

28. *Underscore* the necessity of making concrete efforts to ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their bio-diversity in order to support sustainable development; welcome the concept note on promoting mountain economies in BIMSTEC

countries developed by Nepal to promote cooperation in this area; and decide to establish an Inter-governmental Expert Group to develop an action plan.

Blue Economy

29. *Emphasize* the importance of blue economy and agree to cooperate in this sector for the sustainable development in the region and decide to establish an Inter-governmental Expert Group to develop an action plan on blue economy, keeping in mind the special needs and circumstances of the landlocked Member States.

30. *Note* with satisfaction the hosting of International Blue Economy Conference in Bangladesh in 2017 with participation of government representatives from BIMSTEC Member States.



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BIMSTEC GRID INTERCONNECTION

PREAMBLE

The Governments of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the Kingdom of Bhutan, the Republic of India, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Nepal, the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and the Kingdom of Thailand, the Member States of BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), hereinafter referred to collectively as the "Parties" and individually as a "Party";

Recognizing the need of strengthening economic, commercial and technical collaborations in the region on energy cooperation programs, which will provide the opportunities and challenges to: (i) enhance the intra-regional coordination through an action plan for developing and utilizing various energy resources; (ii) coordinate and optimize the energy infrastructure investment including Grid Interconnections; (iii) encourage the new or renewable sources of energy projects; (iv) enhance energy security of the region (v) encourage for generating additional energy; (vi) encourage cross border energy trade, and (vii) establish the BIMSTEC Energy Center;

Affirming to enhance energy development in the region, the Parties, at the second BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting, in Dhaka, December 1998, requested the respective Lead Countries of each sector to take further steps to form Sectoral Committees and Group of Experts to: (i) examine the different approaches of beneficial projects and to provide support for BIMSTEC members and (ii) to draw up proposals of cooperation for implementation;

Emphasizing that the priority project for Trans-Power Exchange and Development, coordinated by Thailand, was adopted by the fourth meeting of BIMSTEC Energy Sector Committee of Experts/Officials, in Yangon, September 2003, to prepare the Concept Paper for the development of grid interconnections and to propose the action plan for setting up of the Task Force of the Parties;

Recalling that the first BIMSTEC Energy Minister's Conference, October 2005, in New Delhi, approved the Action Plan and stipulations made in respect of energy cooperation in the Declaration;

Further Recalling, the Outcome Document of the BIMSTEC Leaders' Retreat 2016, held in Goa, India on 16 October 2016, where the Leaders decided to expedite the signing of the BIMSTEC Memorandum of Understanding on Grid Interconnection.

Considering that (i) the optimization of using the energy resources in the region for mutual benefits on non-discriminatory basis subject to laws, rules and regulations of the respective Parties; (ii) the promotion of efficient, economic, and secure operation of power system needed through the development of regional electricity networks (iii) the necessity of optimization of capital investment for generation capacity addition across the region and (iv) power exchange through cross border interconnections;

Have agreed to the following:

ARTICLE 1

PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

- 1.1 The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is to provide a broad framework for the Parties to cooperate towards the implementation of grid interconnections for the trade in electricity with a view to promoting rational and optimal power transmission in the BIMSTEC region.

ARTICLE 2

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The Parties accept that their relationship be based on the following principles:
- a) Cooperation: The issues related to regional interconnections be handled in a spirit of cooperation and mutual benefit, that the Parties have sovereign equal rights and obligations, act in solidarity, and refrain from taking advantage of one another. Each Party agrees to cooperate and implement the principle set forth in this MoU in accordance with the laws, rules and regulations of the Member States.
 - b) Sustainable Development: The BIMSTEC Trans-Power Exchange and Development Projects be implemented through strengthening of bilateral and intra-regional cooperation within the framework of relevant laws, rules and regulations of the Member States.
- 2.2 The objectives of grid interconnections for the trade in electricity under this MoU are for all Parties to:
- a) Coordinate and cooperate in the planning, development and operation of interconnected systems to optimize costs while maintaining satisfactory reliability and security;
 - b) Fully recover the costs and share benefits equitably, resulting from the reductions in investments on generation, transmission systems and fuel cost;
 - c) Provide reliable, secure and economic electricity supply to the Parties;
 - d) Develop transmission tariff framework for trading of electricity among the Parties; and
 - e) Open up new avenues of cooperation to promote electricity trade.

- 2.3 Grid interconnections among the BIMSTEC Member States, subject to existing relevant laws, rules and regulations of the respective Member States, will also consider issues, *inter alia*:
- a) Power flow among participating Member States on a non-discriminatory basis taking cognizance of available grid capacity, power supply position and steps to harmonize technical, planning and operational standards of the grids of the connected Parties.
 - b) Arrangements for the mutually agreed imposition or exemption of import, export or transit fee, duty, tax or other government imposed fees and charges on the construction, operation and maintenance of the BIMSTEC grid interconnections.
 - c) Harmonization of institutional, operational, legal and regulatory frameworks for implementation and operation of the grid interconnections and trade among the Parties.

ARTICLE 3

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

- 3.1 The Parties agree for appropriate institutional arrangements and other policy measures to implement this MoU.
- 3.2 The Parties recognize the need to have an appropriate structure referred to as the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection Coordination Committee (BGICC), to actively coordinate, for successful implementation of grid interconnections and trade in electricity. The Parties also recognize the need to plan cross border interconnections through power system studies. For this, the Parties may enable their transmission planning agencies to plan the cross border grid inter-connections through bilateral/ trilateral/ multilateral mutual agreements among the Parties concerned based on the needs of the trade in future through power system studies and sharing of requisite information. The Parties shall designate their national representative(s) to constitute the BGICC which shall report to the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting on Energy and/or Energy Ministers' Meeting.

- 3.3 The BGICC may engage BIMSTEC Energy Sector Committee of Experts/Officials, Task Force for BIMSTEC Trans-Power Exchange and Development Projects, BIMSTEC Energy Center and other institutions to provide technical support.
- 3.4 The BGICC shall determine modalities to implement BIMSTEC Grid Interconnections Master Plan and regional trade arrangements.
- 3.5 The Parties shall authorize their appropriate agencies to enter into necessary agreements for implementation of this MoU.

ARTICLE 4 SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES

- 4.1 The Parties implementing this MoU shall seek amicable resolution through negotiation/consultation if there is any divergence in interpretation or implementation of this MoU. In the event that the divergence continues, it will be referred to BGICC. If BGICC is unable to resolve the differences, that issue shall be referred to the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting on Energy for resolution.

ARTICLE 5 ENTRY INTO FORCE

- 5.1 This MoU shall enter into force on completion of formalities by all Member States and upon issuance of the notification thereof by the Secretary General of BIMSTEC.

ARTICLE 6 VALIDITY OF THE MOU

- 6.1 This MoU shall remain in effect until revised or terminated by all Parties.

ARTICLE 7 WITHDRAWAL FROM THE MOU

- 7.1 Any Party may withdraw from this MoU by giving written notice one year in advance to the Secretary General of BIMSTEC. During the time of withdrawal notification, the Party shall continue to comply with the provisions of this MoU. Withdrawal from this MoU will not affect agreements and contracts signed on the basis of this MoU until the expiration of such agreements and contracts.

ARTICLE 8 RELATION TO OTHER AGREEMENTS

- 8.1 Agreements with non-BIMSTEC country(ies): This MoU shall not restrict any BIMSTEC Member State from entering into agreements with non-BIMSTEC country(ies) on bilateral/multilateral basis provided that such agreement(s) do not create obligations upon the other BIMSTEC Member State(s) that is (are) not Party to such agreement(s). Such agreement(s) shall not impair a BIMSTEC Member State who is Party to such agreement(s) from fulfilling its obligations under this MoU.
- 8.2 Other Existing Agreements: The Parties hereby undertake that they shall continue to respect their rights and obligations under other similar agreements, to which they are also Parties, on power interconnections and trading in electricity existing prior to this MoU.

ARTICLE 9 REVIEW AND AMENDMENT

- 9.1 The provision of this MoU may be reviewed at five year intervals or earlier, if requested by any Party, and shall be amended with the consensus by the Parties.

ARTICLE 10
ENTIRE AGREEMENT

10.1 This MoU constitutes the entire understanding among the Member States.

10.2 *In witness whereof*, the undersigned plenipotentiaries, being duly authorized by their respective Governments, have signed this MoU.

DONE in Kathmandu on the Thirty-First Day of August in the year Two Thousand and Eighteen, in eight originals, in the English language, all texts being equally authentic.

For the People's Republic of Bangladesh

H.E. Mr. Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, M.P.
Foreign Minister

For the Kingdom of Bhutan

H.E. Ambassador Sonam Tshong
Foreign Secretary

For the Republic of India

H.E. General (Dr.) Vijay Kumar Singh (Retd.)
Minister of State for External Affairs

For the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

**H.E. U Kyaw Tin
Union Minister for International Cooperation**

For Nepal

**Hon'ble Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali
Minister for Foreign Affairs**

For the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

**Hon. Vasantha Senanayake
State Minister of Foreign Affairs**

For the Kingdom of Thailand

**H.E. Mr. Siri Jirapongphan
Minister of Energy**