

**Joint Statement of the
Twelfth Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multisectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
(BIMSTEC) Ministerial Meeting
Nay Pyi Taw, Union of Myanmar on 11 December 2009.**

The Twelfth Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multisectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Ministerial Meeting was held in Nay Pyi Taw, Union of Myanmar on 11 December 2009.

The Meeting was attended by H.E. Dr. Dipu Moni, M.P. . Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, H.E. Lyonpo Ugyen Tshering, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bhutan, H.E. Mr. S.M. Krishna, External Affairs Minister of the Republic of India, H.E. U Nyan Win, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Myanmar, H.E Ms. Sujata Koirala, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. H.E. Mr. Rohitha Bogollagama, M.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and H.E. Mr. Kasit Piromya, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand.

His Excellency General Thein Sein, Honourable Prime Minister of the Government of the Union of Myanmar addressed the Opening Session.

H. F. U Nyan Win, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Myanmar assumed chairmanship of the BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting from H.E. Mr. S.M. Krishna., External Affairs Minister of the Republic of India.

Heads of Delegation expressed their sincere appreciation and profound gratitude to the Government of the Union of Myanmar for the cordial reception and generous hospitality to the delegations and for the excellent arrangements made for the Meeting.

The Meeting considered and approved the Report of the 14th Meeting of the Senior Officials held on 10 December 2009 At the conclusion of the Meeting, the Heads of Delegation issued the following Joint Statement:

We, the Heads of Delegation to the Twelfth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting, having convened in Nay Pyi Taw on 11 December 2009, reiterated our commitment to the founding objectives and principles of BIMSTEC to promote socio-economic development and to create an enabling environment for cooperation among Member States.

We noted with deep concern the critical challenges that climate change poses for the world at large, and for our region in particular. Climate change threatens human security in areas as diverse as food, energy and livelihood security; it also poses existential challenges such as climate change induced large scale displacement.

We welcomed the inclusion of Climate Change as the 14th priority area of cooperation, as recommended by the 13th BIMSTEC SOM and endorsed by the 11th Ministerial Meeting held in New Delhi in November 2008. We accepted with appreciation the initiative by Bangladesh to be the lead country for Climate Change. We are confident that the inclusion of this new area of cooperation will contribute significantly to the joint efforts on the mitigation and adaptation to climate change in the BIMSTEC region.

We recalled with appreciation the finalization of the following four documents by the 10th Ministerial Meeting.

- i. BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating international Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking.
- ii. Memorandum of Association (MoA) among the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Member Countries for the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Energy Centre.
- iii. Memorandum of Association (MoA) among the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Member Countries Concerning Establishment of a BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate.
- iv. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission (BCIC) and BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory (BOO).
- v.

We welcomed the signing of the BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking at Nay Pyi Taw on 11 December 2009. We encouraged the Member States to sign the remaining three documents at the earliest.

We reviewed the ongoing progress in the following priority areas of cooperation in BIMSTEC.

Trade and Investment

We reaffirmed the importance of the BIMSTEC FTA in promoting trade and investment in a mutually beneficial manner for all Member States, and enhancing competitiveness and socio-economic development in the BIMSTEC region.

We welcomed the finalization of the text of the Agreement on Trade in Goods and other provisions relating to the Rules of Origin, Operational Certification Procedures and the Agreement on Customs Cooperation at the 18th Meeting of the BIMSTEC TNC at Phuket in June 2009.

We called upon the TNC to finalize the Annexes to the BIMSTEC FTA Agreement on Trade in Goods at the earliest. We welcomed India's kind offer to host the 19th Meeting of the BIMSTEC TNC.

We took note of the ongoing negotiations on the Agreements on Services and Investment under BIMSTEC FTA, and urged the Member States to conclude them as soon as possible.

Transport and Communication

We agreed that improved transportation and communication linkages and greater connectivity between our Member States are important elements for the BIMSTEC process that will provide direct benefits to our peoples. We expressed our satisfaction at the endorsement by all Member States of the BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistics Study (BTILS) conducted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and requested the Chair of BIMSTEC to formally communicate the decision to the ADB. We advised the BIMSTEC Working Group in Bangkok to liaise with ADB to initiate further steps with regard to the implementation of the recommendations of the Study.

Tourism

We appreciated the finalization of the Terms of Reference (TOR) at the 10th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting held in New Delhi in August 2008, and the establishment of the Tourism Working Group for the BIMSTEC to implement tourism cooperation programmes and to follow up the Plan of Action.

We welcomed the setting up of the BIMSTEC Information Center by India for exchange of tourism information. We expressed confidence that the joint promotion and marketing of tourism destinations will promote the tourism industries of the Member States and also create tourism awareness and better understanding among the peoples of the Member States.

Energy

We stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation amongst Member States in the fields of grid connectivity, gas pipelines, hydro power, renewable sources of energy, energy efficiency and energy sector reforms and regulations, and sharing of experiences and best practices with a view to ensuring energy security in the BIMSTEC region. We took note of Thailand's proposal to sign the MoA for the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Energy Centre during the Second BIMSTEC Energy Ministers Meeting to be held in Thailand in 2010

We reiterated our belief that the proposed BIMSTEC Energy Centre in India which was approved at the 10th Ministerial Meeting would contribute to enhancing cooperation in the energy sector among the BIMSTEC Member States.

Technology

We reiterated the need to enhance cooperation in advanced areas of fundamental and applied scientific and technological research among the member states and took note of the revised concept paper submitted by Sri Lanka regarding the establishment of the BIMSTEC Centre for Technology Transfer/Exchange Facility as agreed to by the Second BIMSTEC Summit.

Fisheries

We reaffirmed our commitment to continue cooperation for the sustainable use of marine resources through effective conservation and management of resources in the Bay of Bengal and decided to include inland fisheries in the scope of cooperation in this area. We welcomed the progress in terms of the Joint Survey undertaken during 2007 followed by the relevant workshop in 2008.

We also considered that more workshops should be conducted to further promote cooperation in this sector.

Poverty Alleviation

We welcomed the progress made at the first Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation held in Dhaka in July 2008 and particularly noted the observations of the Ministerial meeting.

We focused on discussions on poverty alleviation in the context of ensuring food security in the BIMSTEC region. We took note of the Plan of Action circulated by Nepal and requested Member States to send their comments as soon as possible. We also welcomed the kind offer of Nepal to host the 2nd BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation in 2010.

We welcomed the decision to establish the BIMSTEC Poverty Alleviation Centre in Bangladesh as a step forward for the realization of the MDGs in the BIMSTEC region.

Cultural Cooperation

We recalled the Paro Initiative and Plan of Action adopted at the First BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Cultural Cooperation held in Bhutan in May 2006. We reiterated our commitment to expand cooperation in culture to include cultural values, diversity and heritage and agreed to extend cultural exchanges among Member States.

We looked forward to the early signing of the MoA on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission and BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory in Bhutan by the Member States. We expressed the hope that the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory (BCIO) would be operational as soon as possible.

Agriculture

We welcomed the progress made during the 2nd Expert Group Meeting held in India and a wide range of cooperation activities. We expressed hope that these concrete activities and projects would be implemented expeditiously. We felt the need to address the issues relating to agricultural productivity, post harvest technologies and management, and competitiveness in the region. In this regard, we emphasized the importance of further collaboration in research and development, technology transfer and private sector participation among the Member States.

Counter-Terrorism & Transnational Crime

We welcomed the signing of the BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking by the Member States which reflects the resolve of our Governments and peoples to combat the menace posed by terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking. We reiterated the significance of the work done in the Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime and its four sub-groups covering Intelligence Sharing: Legal and Law Enforcement Issues; Combating the Financing of Terrorism and Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursor Chemicals

Environment & Disaster Management

We agreed that the BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate to be established in India, as approved by the 10th Ministerial Meeting, would be an effective mechanism in promoting regional cooperation on disaster risk reduction and management among BIMSTEC Member States.

Public Health

We took note of the efforts in enhancing cooperation in the area of traditional medicine and welcomed Thailand's offer to host the 2nd BIMSTEC Meeting on the Network of National Centres of Coordination in Traditional Medicine in 2010. We expressed our appreciation for Thailand's continued support to BIMSTEC Member States in capacity building in public health.

We also took note with appreciation India's initiative on capacity building by granting scholarships to the nationals of BIMSTEC Member States to study traditional medicine in India.

People-to-People Contact

We expressed appreciation for initiatives taken by India to set up a BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks. We expressed our hope that the forthcoming meeting of the Network to be organized by the Research & Information System for Developing Countries (RIS). India, in 2010, would significantly enhance mutual understanding and goodwill through people-to-people contact in the BIMSTEC region.

We also expressed appreciation for Thailand's hosting the 12th Anniversary of BIMSTEC to promote people-to-people contact and interaction among Member States

We encouraged the Member States to observe the BIMSTEC Day (6 June) to create greater public awareness about BIMSTEC.

Permanent Secretariat

We stressed the need for early establishment of the BIMSTEC Secretariat to impart greater dynamism and added momentum to cooperation among Member States in the BIMSTEC region. We agreed that the Chair, in consultation with Member States, will devise the mechanism in order to decide the venue for the Permanent Secretariat

In this context, we directed the Chair of BIMSTEC Joint Working Group to conclude its assigned tasks as decided at the 11th Ministerial Meeting in November 2008, at the earliest.

BIMSTEC Centre

We thanked Thailand for its continued contribution to the BIMSTEC Centre for the past five years.

13th Ministerial Meeting

We decided that the 13th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting and 15th Senior Officials Meeting will be held in 2010 in Myanmar.