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

Sixth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC)
01-02 February 2023
Bangkok, Thailand

Report of the Sixth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC)

Agenda Item 01: Opening of the Meeting

01. The Sixth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC) was held in Bangkok, Thailand on 01-02 February 2023.

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. **Mr. Cherdchai Chaivaivid**, Director General, Department of International Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand welcomed all the distinguished delegates to the Sixth Meeting of the BPWC and delivered the Opening Remarks. In the remarks, he mentioned that the BPWC is a crucial platform to exchange ideas for the future of BIMSTEC, which not only serves the mutual interest of all Member States, but also an engine of cooperation for the Bay of Bengal region. He also reiterated the need to ensure that BIMSTEC stays relevant against the current backdrop of post-pandemic recovery. The full text of the Opening Remarks is at **Annex II**.

04. **H.E. Mr. Tenzin Lekphell**, Secretary General of BIMSTEC delivered the Special Remarks. In the remarks, he expressed deep gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand for hosting the Sixth Meeting of the BPWC and thanked the Delegations from all the Member States for attending the Meeting. He apprised on the major developments achieved since the Fifth BPWC Meeting. The full text of the Special Remarks is at **Annex III**.

Agenda Item 02: Election of the Chairperson

05. As per the existing practice, Mr. Cherdchai Chaivaivid, Director General, Department of International Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, as the Head of Delegation of the Member State holding the BIMSTEC Chairmanship, was elected to chair the Meeting. Upon assuming the Chairmanship, the Chair thanked all the delegates for their participation in the Meeting and briefed the delegates pertaining to conduct the Meeting.

Agenda Item 03: Adoption of the Agenda

06. The Meeting adopted the Agenda as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/BPWC/06/2023/01/Rev.2**, which is at **Annex IV**.

Agenda Item 04: Item-wise review of the action taken on the decisions of Fifth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC) held in Bangkok, Thailand on 13-15 September 2022

07. The Meeting took note of the progress on the decisions of the 5th Meeting of BPWC as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/BPWC/06/2023/02/Rev.1**.

08. Under the Agenda item, the following issues were raised by the Member States and recommended to the Twenty Third Session of BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) for endorsement:

- (i) The Secretariat will hire a technical expert to develop the "Manual for Revision of Salaries and Allowances of the BIMSTEC Secretariat". The Secretariat may submit the draft manual by end of 2023 with a view to getting approval on the draft manual by 2024.
- (ii) The Lead Countries will develop time bound plan of action/ work programme on their respective sectors and sub-sectors of cooperation.
- (iii) The Delegation of India sought cooperation from the National Focal Points regarding nomination of the Governing Body of BIMSTEC Energy Centre (BEC) for facilitating the negotiation and finalization of Host Country Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the BIMSTEC Secretariat for Establishing BIMSTEC Energy Centre in India.
- (iv) The BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (BNPTT) Meeting will be held based on the theme of sectors and sub-sectors of cooperation led by the Member State hosting the Meeting and come up with appropriate policy recommendations. The National Focal Points will attend the BNPTT Meeting on regular basis. The Report of the BNPTT Meeting will be submitted to the BPWC Meeting for consideration.

- (v) Nepal will forward the plans of action of Culture and Tourism sub-sectors soon.
- (vi) Nepal will hold a “BIMSTEC Tourism Fair” in Lumbini, invitation of which will be circulated through the Secretariat shortly.
- (vii) Bangladesh, as the Lead Country for Trade, Investment and Development sector, will organize meetings/ events on the respective sector, the details of which will be conveyed through the Secretariat soon.

Agenda Item 05: Status of the draft Rules of Procedure (RoP) for BIMSTEC Mechanisms

**Draft Rules of Procedure for Core BIMSTEC Mechanisms
Draft Rules of Procedure for Sectoral BIMSTEC Mechanisms
Draft Rules of Procedure for External Relations/Others**

09. The Meeting considered the Note by the Secretariat as contained in the Secretariat’s Document Number **BIMSTEC/BPWC/06/2023/03** and took note on the status of the draft Rules of Procedure (RoP) for BIMSTEC Mechanisms including the change of nomenclature of “Rules of Procedure (RoP) for External Relations/Others” to “Rules of Procedure (RoP) for BIMSTEC’s External Relations”.

10. After deliberations, the Meeting finalized the Rules of Procedure for BIMSTEC Mechanisms (*i.e.*, RoP for Core BIMSTEC Mechanisms, RoP for Sectoral BIMSTEC Mechanisms and RoP for BIMSTEC’s External Relations) and recommended to the Twenty Third Session of the BIMSTEC SOM for endorsement and subsequent approval by the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting. The finalized draft of the Rules of Procedure for BIMSTEC Mechanisms is at **Annex V**.

Agenda Item 06: Status of the revision of salaries of the Secretary General, Directors and General Services Staff- I to V

11. The Meeting took note of the Status of the revision of salaries of the Secretary General, Directors and General Services Staff- I to V as contained in the Secretariat’s Document Number **BIMSTEC/BPWC/06/2023/04**.

12. The Meeting recommended the revision of salaries of the Secretary General, Directors and General Services Staff- I to V as proposed during the Fifth Meeting of the BPWC, to the Twenty Third Session of the BIMSTEC SOM for endorsement.

Agenda Item 07: Discussion on the Secretariat's revised budget for FY 2022

13. The Meeting considered the Note by the Secretariat on the Secretariat's revised budget for FY 2022 as contained in its Document Number **BIMSTEC/BPWC/06/2023/05** and recommended the Secretariat's actual expenditure/revised budget for FY 2022 (January-December) [**Annex VI**] to the Twenty Third Session of the BIMSTEC SOM for endorsement.

Agenda Item 08: Re-appropriation of the Secretariat's finalized estimated budget for FY 2023

14. The Meeting considered the Note by the Secretariat on the re-appropriation of the Secretariat's finalized estimated budget for FY 2023 as contained in its Document Number **BIMSTEC/BPWC/06/2023/06**. After deliberations, the Meeting recommended the re-appropriated estimated budget of the Secretariat for FY 2023 (January-December) amounting to US\$ 1,617,766.50 (**Annex VII**) to the Twenty Third Session of the BIMSTEC SOM for endorsement.

15. In anticipation of the endorsement of BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting and approval of BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting, the Meeting recommended the Secretariat to request the Member States to make their contribution for FY 2023, based on payable amount for the re-appropriated estimated budget for FY 2023 after deduction of surplus from the budget for FY 2022.

Agenda Item 09: Discussion on the scale of contribution to the annual budget of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat

16. The Meeting considered the Note by the Secretariat on the scale of contribution to the annual budget of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat, as contained in its Document Number **BIMSTEC/BPWC/06/2023/07**. After discussion, the Meeting recommended extension of the existing sharing ratio of scale of contribution to the budget of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat **for next three years, i.e., 2023 to 2025 without change** and submitted to the Twenty Third Session of BIMSTEC SOM for endorsement.

17. The Meeting tasked the Secretariat to submit a detailed proposal with supporting information on readjusting the scale of contribution to the annual budget of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat based on the available data of the similar international/regional organizations located in South and South East Asia for consideration of the BPWC Meeting.

Agenda Item 10: Discussion on the fixation of a mechanism on finalization and approval of the Secretariat's budgetary matters

18. The Meeting considered the Note by the Secretariat on the fixation of a mechanism on finalization and approval of the Secretariat's budgetary matters, as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/BPWC/06/2023/08/Rev.1**.

19. The Meeting deliberated on the Secretariat's proposal along with the comments received from Member States on the revised draft text of Paragraph 3 of Part II (Annual Estimates and Budget Proposal) of the existing 'Financial Rules and Regulations of the BIMSTEC Secretariat'. After deliberation, the Meeting updated the draft text of Part II, which is at **Annex VIII**. All Member States, except Myanmar, have accepted the revised formulation of Paragraph 3 of Part II of the existing 'Financial Rules and Regulations of the BIMSTEC Secretariat'. The Meeting decided that Myanmar will convey its comments/concurrence on the revised formulation as soon as possible.

Agenda Item 11: Discussion on disposing of the Secretary General's flag car through auction

20. The Meeting considered the Note by the Secretariat on disposing of the Secretary General's flag car through auction as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/BPWC/06/2023/09**.

21. After deliberation, the Meeting updated the draft Procedures for Disposal of Motor Vehicle of the BIMSTEC Secretariat (**Annex IX**), and recommended the following:

- (i) The Secretariat will prepare a comprehensive 'Procedures for Disposal of goods and services of the Secretariat' keeping consistency with the canons of financial propriety and circulate among the Member States for consideration with a view to discussing during the Seventh Meeting of the BPWC;
- (ii) Pending finalization of the disposal procedures, the Secretariat will dispose the Secretary General's old flag car through auction upon completion of the Registration of new flag car.

Agenda Item 12: Consideration of the Report of Second Meeting of the Governing Board of BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate held in Noida, India on 01 November 2022

22. The Meeting considered the Report of Second Meeting of the Governing Board of BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate held in Noida, India on 01 November 2022 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/BPWC/06/2023/10**.

23. As the BPWC is mandated to deliberate on the administrative and financial matters of the Secretariat and BIMSTEC Centres/Entities, the Meeting finalized the draft text of the Host Country Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the BIMSTEC Secretariat for Establishing BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate in India (**Annex X**) and submitted to the Twenty Third Session of BIMSTEC SOM for endorsement.

Agenda Item 13: Consideration of the Report of First Meeting of the *Ad hoc* Expert Group on the Establishment of BIMSTEC Development Fund held virtually at the BIMSTEC Secretariat, Dhaka on 19 December 2022

24. The Meeting extensively deliberated on the Report of First Meeting of the *Ad hoc* Expert Group on the Establishment of BIMSTEC Development Fund held virtually at the BIMSTEC Secretariat, Dhaka on 19 December 2022 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/BPWC/06/2023/11**.

25. In view of the financial commitment that will be required to be made by Member States on a recurring basis, the Meeting recommended postponing the establishment of the BIMSTEC Development Fund at this stage for next 3-5 years, by which time the BIMSTEC platform would have acquired maturity to undertake transnational BIMSTEC projects or finance projects in BIMSTEC Member States.

26. The Meeting also recommended that the BPWC may be mandated to identify the manner in which BIMSTEC can tap into the technical and financial resources available with the international donor community to support BIMSTEC cooperation projects. The Meeting tasked the Secretary General to interact with multilateral development agencies and regional organizations of the Asian region and develop a model with cost estimates for further consideration of Member States.

Agenda Item 14: Discussion on chairing of the BIMSTEC Meetings on issues outside the reconstituted Sectors and Sub-Sectors of BIMSTEC cooperation

27. The Meeting considered the Note by the Secretariat on chairing of the BIMSTEC Meetings on issues outside the reconstituted Sectors and Sub-Sectors of BIMSTEC cooperation as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/BPWC/06/2023/12**.

28. The Meeting felt the necessity of continuing these areas of cooperation as identified by the BIMSTEC Leaders. After discussion, the Meeting recommended inclusion of the following under the purview of reconstituted sectors and sub-sectors of cooperation and submitted to the Twenty Third Session of the BIMSTEC SOM for endorsement:

- (i) “Blue Economy” will be included as the sub-sector under “Trade, Investment and Development” sector, led by Bangladesh. Bangladesh expressed its readiness to host the Meeting on Blue Economy very soon.
- (ii) “Mountain Economy” will be included as the sub-sector under “Environment and Climate Change” sector, led by Bhutan. Bhutan will revert on the aforesaid recommendation by 28 February 2023.
- (iii) “Poverty Alleviation” will be included as the sub-sector under “People-to-People Contact” sector, led by Nepal. Nepal will revert on the aforesaid recommendation by 28 February 2023.
- (iv) The Meeting agreed that these issues remain cross-cutting in nature and therefore, all Member States should work closely on these issues across relevant sectors, with the leadership of the Lead Country.

Agenda Item 15: Discussion and finalization of the draft Provisional Agenda of the Twenty Third Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials’ Meeting (SOM)

29. The Meeting considered the draft Provisional Agenda of the Twenty Third Session of the BIMSTEC SOM as contained in the Secretariat’s Document Number **BIMSTEC/BPWC/06/2023/13**. After deliberations, the Meeting finalized the draft Provisional Agenda of the Twenty Third Session of the BIMSTEC SOM (**Annex XI**) and submitted for its consideration.

Agenda Item 16: Discussion on the draft Provisional Agenda and draft Joint Statement of the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting (MM)

30. The Meeting considered the draft Provisional Agenda and draft Joint Statement of the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting (MM) as contained in the Secretariat’s Document Number **BIMSTEC/BPWC/06/2023/14**.

31. After extensive deliberations, the Meeting recommended the draft Provisional Agenda (**Annex XII**) and the draft Joint Statement of the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting (**Annex XIII**) to the Twenty Third Session of the BIMSTEC SOM for consideration.

Agenda Item 17: Any Other Matters

32. No matter was raised under this Agenda Item.

Agenda Item 18: Date and Venue of the Seventh Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee

33. Thailand will coordinate with the Secretariat and inform the Member States on the details of the Seventh Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC) in due course.

Agenda Item 19: Consideration and Adoption of the Report of the Sixth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee

34. The Meeting considered and adopted the Report of the Sixth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee for submission to the Twenty Third Session of the BIMSTEC SOM for consideration.

Agenda Item 20: Closing of the Meeting

35. The Meeting expressed deep appreciation to the Kingdom of Thailand for the warm hospitality extended to the participants and for the excellent arrangement made for the Sixth BPWC Meeting. The Chair thanked the delegates for their valuable contributions in successful conclusion of the Meeting while the Delegates appreciated the Chair for steering of the Meeting effectively and efficiently.

36. The Meeting also expressed its sincere thanks to the Secretary General and the Secretariat for their hard work and contribution in facilitating the Meeting.
