



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

Twenty Third Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM)
08 March 2023
Bangkok, Thailand (Virtual)

Report of the Twenty Third Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting

Agenda Item 01: Opening of the Meeting

01. The Twenty Third Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) was held virtually in Bangkok, Thailand on 08 March 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. In his Opening Remarks, **His Excellency Sarun Charoensuwan**, Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Thailand cordially welcomed all distinguished delegates to the 23rd Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting being held virtually. He mentioned Thailand's proposal of draft BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030 as a set of priorities to guide BIMSTEC towards a prosperous, resilient and open region. He also underscored that the shared vision for BIMSTEC focuses on sustainable development, connectivity and institutional building to drive BIMSTEC towards greater regional integration and shared prosperity. He thanked the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee and the Secretariat for their hard work in finalizing key documents, including the Rules of Procedures for BIMSTEC Mechanisms, the Terms of Reference to establish the Eminent Persons' Group, and the draft text of the Bangkok Vision 2030, that will be submitted to the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for their approval. The full text of the Opening Remarks is at **Annex II**.

04. In his brief Special Remarks, **His Excellency Tenzin Lekphell**, Secretary General of BIMSTEC welcomed the distinguished delegates to the Twenty Third Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting. He mentioned that the Twenty Third SOM was very important and timely in terms of taking stock of progress and also in terms of brainstorming and preparing for outcomes at the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting and the Sixth BIMSTEC Summit. The full text of the Special Remarks is at **Annex III**.

Agenda Item 02: Election of the Chairperson

05. As per the existing practice, **His Excellency Sarun Charoensuwan**, Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Thailand and Head of Delegation of the Chair country of BIMSTEC, was elected as the Chair of the 23rd Session of BIMSTEC SOM by acclamation. The Chair thanked all the delegates for their participation in the Meeting and briefed the delegations on issues pertaining to the conduct of the Meeting.

Agenda Item 03: Adoption of the Agenda

06. The Meeting considered and adopted the Agenda, which is at **Annex IV**.

Agenda Item 04: General Statement on the progress of sectors by the respective Lead Countries

07. Upon request by the Chair, the Lead Countries delivered Statements on the progress of their respective sectors and sub-sectors in alphabetical order. The Statements of the Member States are annexed as follows:

- | | | |
|-----|------------|-------------------|
| (a) | Bangladesh | Annex V |
| (b) | Bhutan | Annex VI |
| (c) | India | Annex VII |
| (d) | Myanmar | Annex VIII |
| (e) | Nepal | Annex IX |
| (f) | Sri Lanka | Annex X |
| (g) | Thailand | Annex XI |

08. The Meeting took note of the Statements delivered by the Lead Countries on the progress of their respective sectors and sub-sectors.

Agenda Item 05: Report of the Secretary General on the work of the Organization and review of the progress since the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit (30 March 2022) preceded by the Twenty Second Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 28 March 2022

09. The Meeting took note of the Secretary General's Report on the work of the Organization and progress since the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit (30 March 2022) preceded by the Twenty Second Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 28 March 2022, as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/23/2023/02/Rev.2**.

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

Trade, Investment and Development

06.1 Report of the Twenty First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Working Group on Rules of Origin held virtually in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 18-19 October 2022

10. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the Twenty First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Working Group on Rules of Origin held virtually in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 18-19 October 2022 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/23/2023/03**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

Environment & Climate Change

06.2 Report of the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on Environment and Climate Change held virtually in Thimphu, Bhutan on 06 December 2022

11. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on Environment and Climate Change held virtually in Thimphu, Bhutan on 06 December 2022 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/23/2023/04**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

Security

06.3 Report of the Tenth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (JWG- CTTC) held in New Delhi, India on 12-13 January 2023

12. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the Tenth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (JWG-CTTC) held in New Delhi, India on 12-13 January 2023 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/23/2023/05**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

06.4 Report of the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Disaster Management Cooperation held virtually in New Delhi, India on 12 May 2022

13. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Disaster Management Cooperation held virtually in New Delhi, India on 12 May 2022 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/23/2023/06**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

06.5 Report of the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Himalayan Science Council held virtually in New Delhi, India on 12 October 2021

14. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Himalayan Science Council held virtually in New Delhi, India on 12 October 2021 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/23/2023/07**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

People-to-People Contact

06.6 Consideration of the recommendations from the Report of the Fifth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (BNPTT) held virtually in New Delhi, India on 21-22 December 2020

15. The Meeting considered and endorsed the listed recommendations by the Secretariat from the Report of the Fifth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (BNPTT) held virtually in New Delhi, India on 21-22 December 2020 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/23/2023/08**.

Connectivity

06.7 Report of the Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Working Group to finalize the Draft Text of the Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation held virtually in New Delhi, India on 30 August 2022

16. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Working Group to finalize the Draft Text of the Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation held virtually in New Delhi, India on 30 August 2022 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/23/2023/09**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

Core Mechanisms

06.8 Report of the Fifth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC) held in Bangkok, Thailand on 13-15 September 2022

17. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the Fifth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC) held in Bangkok, Thailand on 13-15 September 2022 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/23/2023/10**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

06.9 Report of the Special Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (S-BPWC) held virtually at the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 10 October 2022

18. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the Special Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (S-BPWC) held virtually at the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 10 October 2022 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/23/2023/11**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

06.10 Report of the Special Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (S-BPWC) held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 21-22 December 2022

19. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the Special Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (S-BPWC) held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 21-22 December 2022 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/23/2023/12**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

06.11 Report of the Special Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (S-BPWC) held virtually at the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 23 January 2023

20. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the Special Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (S-BPWC) held virtually at the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 23 January 2023 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/23/2023/13**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

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

21. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the Sixth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC) held in Bangkok, Thailand on 01-02 February 2023 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/23/2023/14**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

Agenda Item 07: Consideration of the finalized Draft Rules of Procedure for BIMSTEC Mechanisms:

-Finalized Draft Rules of Procedure for Core BIMSTEC Mechanisms

-Finalized Draft Rules of Procedure for Sectoral BIMSTEC Mechanisms

-Finalized Draft Rules of Procedure for BIMSTEC's External Relations

22. The Meeting appreciated the efforts of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee and the Secretariat for finalizing the draft Rules of Procedure for BIMSTEC Mechanisms.

23. The Meeting considered and endorsed the finalized Draft Rules of Procedure for BIMSTEC Mechanisms, which is at **Annex XII**, for submission to the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for approval with a view to adoption by the Sixth BIMSTEC Summit.

Agenda Item 08: Consideration of the finalized Draft Terms of Reference (ToR) for Eminent Persons' Group on the Future Directions of BIMSTEC

24. The Meeting considered and endorsed the finalized Draft Terms of Reference (ToR) for Eminent Persons' Group on the Future Directions of BIMSTEC, which is at **Annex XIII**, for submission to the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for approval.

Agenda Item 09: Consideration of the finalized Draft Text of the Administrative and Disciplinary Rules of the Secretariat

25. The Meeting thanked the Member States for finalizing the Draft Text of the Administrative and Disciplinary Rules of the Secretariat.

26. The Meeting considered and endorsed the finalized Draft Text of the Administrative and Disciplinary Rules of the Secretariat, which is at **Annex XIV**, for submission to the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for approval.

Agenda Item 10: Consideration of the finalized Draft Concept Note and the Draft Text of the BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030

27. The Meeting appreciated Thailand for preparing the Draft Text of the BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030 and also the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee for finalizing this vision document.

28. The Meeting considered and endorsed the finalized Draft Concept Note and the Draft Text of the BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030, which is at **Annex XV**, for submission to the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for approval with a view to adoption of the BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030 by the Sixth BIMSTEC Summit.

Agenda Item 11: Discussion on holding the BIMSTEC Home Ministers' Meeting

29. The Meeting considered Note by the Secretariat on holding the BIMSTEC Home Ministers' Meeting as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/23/2023/19**.

30. Upon request made by the Chair, the Delegation of India, as the Lead Country for Security sector, apprised the Meeting on the rationale and significance of establishing a new mechanism of BIMSTEC Home Ministers' Meeting.

31. The Meeting tasked the BPWC to finalize the list of subjects that will be brought under the supervision of the proposed BIMSTEC Home Ministers' Meeting and the subjects that will be dealt with by the BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs' Meeting. As both Meeting mechanisms are important for BIMSTEC Security cooperation, and given that there could be overlap between the two, the BPWC will propose the mechanism by which information from one Meeting can be properly shared with the other on a regular basis.

32. The Meeting also tasked the BPWC to formulate detailed Terms of Reference of BIMSTEC Home Ministers' Meeting, preferably before the Sixth BIMSTEC Summit.

Agenda Item 12: Consideration of the reporting schema for various dialogue mechanisms operating under the Security Sector of BIMSTEC Cooperation

33. The Meeting considered and endorsed the reporting schema for various dialogue mechanisms operating under the Security Sector of BIMSTEC Cooperation, which is at **Annex XVI**, for submission to the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for approval.

Agenda Item 13: Consideration of the finalized draft text of the Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation

34. The Meeting considered and endorsed the finalized draft text of the Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation, which is at **Annex XVII**, for submission to the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for approval, with a view to signing at the Sixth BIMSTEC Summit.

35. The Meeting requested the Member States to complete their respective internal procedure to sign the Agreement during the upcoming Sixth BIMSTEC Summit.

Agenda Item 14: Consideration of the finalized 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

36. The Meeting considered and endorsed the finalized 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, which is at **Annex XVIII**, for submission to the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for approval.

Agenda Item 15: Consideration of the amendment of Part II (Annual Estimates and Budget Proposal) of the “Financial Rules and Regulations of the BIMSTEC Secretariat”

37. The Meeting considered and endorsed the amendment of Part II (Annual Estimates and Budget Proposal) of the “Financial Rules and Regulations of the BIMSTEC Secretariat”. The amended “Financial Rules and Regulations of the BIMSTEC Secretariat” is at **Annex XIX**, for submission to the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for approval.

Agenda Item 16: Consideration of the inclusion of Blue Economy, Mountain Economy and Poverty Alleviation under the purview of reconstituted sectors/sub-sectors of BIMSTEC Cooperation

38. The Meeting considered and endorsed the inclusion of Blue Economy, Mountain Economy and Poverty Alleviation under the purview of reconstituted sectors/sub-sectors of BIMSTEC Cooperation and recommended the following to the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for approval with a view to adoption by the Sixth BIMSTEC Summit:

- (i) **Blue Economy:** Sub-sector under “Trade, Investment and Development” sector, led by Bangladesh.
- (ii) **Mountain Economy:** Sub-sector under “Environment and Climate Change” sector, led by Bhutan.
- (iii) **Poverty Alleviation:** Sub-sector under “People-to-People Contact” sector, led by Nepal.

Agenda Item 17: Consideration of the Secretariat’s revised budget for FY 2022 and estimated budget for FY 2023

39. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Secretariat’s revised budget/ actual Expenditure of US\$ 1,205,155.72 for the FY 2022 (**Annex XX**) and submitted to the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for approval.

40. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Secretariat’s estimated budget of US\$ 1,617,766.50 for FY 2023 (**Annex XXI**) and submitted to the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for approval.

Agenda Item 18: Discussion and finalization of the revised draft Provisional Agenda and revised draft Joint Statement of the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting (MM)

41. After discussion, the Meeting finalized the revised draft Provisional Agenda and the draft Joint Statement of the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting, which are at **Annex XXII** and **XXIII** respectively, for consideration of the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting to be held virtually in Bangkok, Thailand on 09 March 2023.

Agenda Item 19: Discussion on the convening of the Sixth BIMSTEC Summit

42. The Meeting considered the Note by Secretariat on the convening of the Sixth BIMSTEC Summit as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/23/2023/27/Rev.1**. The Meeting took note of the proposal of Thailand to hold the Sixth BIMSTEC Summit on 30 November 2023 in Bangkok (physical mode) and its preceding Meetings from 28-29 November 2023.

43. The Delegation of Thailand requested the Member States to convey their concurrences to the proposed dates of Sixth BIMSTEC Summit and its preceding Meetings **by 01 May 2023**. Thailand expressed their hope to receive positive responses from the Member States as this would be first in person Summit after the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit in 2018.

Agenda Item 20: Any Other Matters

20.1 Proposal of Thailand to establish the BIMSTEC Business Advisory Council (BIMSTEC BAC)

44. Upon request made by the Chair, the delegation of Thailand apprised the Meeting on their proposal to establish the BIMSTEC Business Advisory Council (BIMSTEC BAC) comprising of the private sectors representatives of the Member States. Thailand will forward a Concept Note on the establishment of the BIMSTEC BAC for the consideration of the Member States.

Agenda Item 21: Date and Venue of the Twenty Fourth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting

45. The delegation of Thailand briefed the Meeting on holding of the Twenty Fourth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting on 28 November 2023 in Bangkok (Physical mode) and informed that the logistical details will be circulated in due course upon receipt of concurrences from all the Member States.

Agenda Item 22: Consideration and Adoption of the Report of the Twenty Third Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting

46. The Meeting considered and adopted the Report of the Twenty Third Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting for submission to the Nineteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting to be held virtually in Bangkok, Thailand on 09 March 2023.

Agenda Item 23: Closing of the Meeting

47. The Heads of Delegations of the Member States conveyed their deep appreciation and gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand for hosting the Twenty Third Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting virtually. The Chair thanked the Delegations for their valuable contributions and active participation. The Meeting expressed appreciation to the Chair for his able stewardship in steering the Meeting.

48. 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.
