

**Statement delivered by H.E. U Wunna Maung Lwin,
Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the
Republic of the Union of Myanmar at the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit
(Virtual Mode) (30 March 2022)**
*“BIMSTEC - Towards a Resilient Region, Prosperous Economies and
Healthy Peoples”*

**Mr. Chair His Excellency Hon’ble President
of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka,
Excellencies, Prime Ministers and the Secretary General of BIMSTEC,
Distinguished Delegates,**

- It is my great honour to attend this Summit on behalf of the Chairman of the State Administration Council and the Prime Minister of Myanmar. Allow me to convey the best wishes from His Excellency Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to all Your Excellencies who are present here today at the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit.
- At the outset, I would like to join other BIMSTEC leaders to congratulate the Chair, for its dedication to convene this Fifth BIMSTEC Summit which has set a historic milestone of our cooperation by signing the BIMSTEC Charter and other agreements.
- Indeed, the Summit today demonstrates friendship and solidarity of the BIMSTEC family against current and future challenges, including COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, it also provides an opportune avenue to exchange views on strengthening BIMSTEC cooperation, mitigating the impact of the pandemic and expedite post-pandemic economic recovery in the region.

- I would like to take this opportunity to express Myanmar's appreciation to India and Thailand for the kind assistance rendering towards Myanmar during our fight against Covid-19 pandemic.

Mr. Chair,

- BIMSTEC has entered into a new era through the signing of BIMSTEC Charter which ensures BIMSTEC to be a rule-based organization. I do congratulate Sri Lanka, in its capacity as the current Chair, for its relentless efforts in facilitating the process of Charter formulation until all seven Member States have reached consensus.
- The Charter reaffirmed long-standing principles of BIMSTEC in particular the principles of sovereign equality, non-interference in internal affairs, peaceful co-existence, mutual respect and consensus. I strongly believe that those principles are of great importance for the success and longevity of BIMSTEC cooperation.
- I am of the view that the *principle of sovereign equality* has direct correlation with mutual trust, confidence and understanding upon the cooperation mechanism by the Member States.
- Another important principle I do believe is the *principle of consensus* as it generates *solidarity* among the Member States. All Member States are of sovereign nations, and regional cooperation like BIMSTEC requires transforming such individual power of each Member State into collective action which we define as "solidarity".
- Although we have been able to sign the BIMSTEC Charter in this meeting, we still have many jobs to be done in order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of BIMSTEC cooperation such as the formulation of the Rules of Procedure.

Mr. Chair,

- “Resilience” is rightly chosen for the theme of today’s meeting. We all witnessed the unprecedented magnitude of destruction by the COVID-19 pandemic on the socioeconomic livelihoods of the peoples in the region.
- Health security has been greatly hampered by the deadly virus, connectivity has been interrupted, economy slowdown, big gap between regional food demand and production and increased un-employment rate are some of the obstacles to achieve “Prosperous Economies” in the region.
- However, I have great confidence that we will be able to build a strong “Regional Resilient” through the collective power of BIMSTEC based on the solidarity of seven Member States.

Mr. Chair,

- In this given situation of the pandemic, our cooperation on health security shall be given top most priority under the BIMSTEC framework.
- Since COVID-19 virus is still going strong with the new variants, collective and coordinated efforts, and mutual support among the Member States should be enhanced for regional health security.
- One of the main reasons that caused economic breakdown during the pandemic is “connectivity interruption”. It is understandable that economic recovery could not be achieved unless proper restoration of *physical and economic* connectivity in the region.
- In this regard, Myanmar welcomes the adoption of the *BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity*, which I believe will be a guiding framework to achieve enhanced connectivity leading to the prosperous economies in the BIMSTEC region, as well as to promote synergy with other

regional connectivity frameworks. I thank ADB for its support in formulating the Master Plan.

Mr. Chair,

- One of the daunting challenges of our world is to ensure food and nutritional security for rapidly growing global population. Pandemic, climate change, natural disasters, global economic recession made this challenge to get worsened. BIMSTEC region has no exception.
- As a Lead Country, the breadth and depth of our cooperation on Agriculture and Food Security has to be expanded, which will not only promote food and nutritional security but also help our efforts on poverty alleviation.
- Myanmar successfully hosted the first ever BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture in July 2019 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar as part of our common endeavor.

Mr. Chair,

- Terrorism is unacceptable affront to all humanity. We must condemn all acts, methods and practices of terrorism, which cannot be justified under any circumstances, regardless of their motivation, forms and manifestations, wherever and whoever committed.
- Indeed, the act of terrorism directly undermines the regional security and endangers our ongoing efforts to achieve “Prosperous Economies” and ensure sustainable growth and development.
- In this context, I do welcome the entry into force of the *BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking* and the signing of the *BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters* by this Summit.

Mr. Chair,

- Despite having significant achievements made by the Member States, poverty still remains a challenge for all of us. We need to promote regional cooperation under the BIMSTEC for post-COVID-19 economic recovery with special attention for poverty alleviation.

Mr. Chair,

- Taking this opportunity, I would like to congratulate Thailand for taking responsibilities of the next Chair of BIMSTEC cooperation, and I would like to assure our full support and active cooperation under Thailand's leadership.
- Myanmar also welcomes Bangladesh's initiatives to expand the existing BIMSTEC Secretariat by constructing a modern building at the same location in Dhaka.
- I would like to express our profound thanks to India for generous contribution of 1 million USD to the Secretariat for capacity enhancement.
- I would also like to congratulate **Mr. Tenzin Lekphell, new Secretary-General of BIMSTEC**, for his able stewardship of the BIMSTEC Secretariat and valuable contribution to the BIMSTEC cooperation.

Mr. Chair,

- Before concluding, I would like to reiterate Myanmar's firm commitments of active cooperation under the BIMSTEC cooperation towards "a Peaceful, Prosperous and Sustainable Bay of Bengal Region".
- I thank you.
