

**Statement by H.E. U Win Myint, Hon'ble President of Myanmar at the
opening ceremony of the 4th BIMSTEC Summit, 30 August 2018,
Kathmandu, Nepal**

(The following is the official transcript of the speech delivered by President U Win Myint at the opening ceremony of the 4th BIMSTEC Summit)

I would like to express our profound thanks and appreciation to the Government and the people of Nepal for the warm and generous hospitality extended to me and my delegation.

It is my honor to attend this meeting for the first time and I truly believe that our meeting will provide opportunities to exchange views and explore ways and means to strengthen BIMSTEC cooperation.

At the Third BIMSTEC Summit, held in Nay Pyi Taw in 2014, we agreed to deepen cooperation within the framework of BIMSTEC and strengthen institutional mechanism. The member states also reached an agreement for the establishment of a permanent BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka and appointment of the Secretary General.

I would also like to congratulate the first Secretary-General Mr. Sumith Nakandala for his active and valuable contribution. Let me also take this opportunity to welcome Mr. Shahidul Islam as the second Secretary General of BIMSTEC.

I would like to congratulate the Government of India for the successful hosting of the BIMSTEC Leaders' Retreat in October 2016. The Outcome Document and Agenda of Action of the BIMSTEC Leaders' Retreat are indeed a practical guideline for BIMSTEC cooperation.

Agriculture is the mainstay of economy for many of us. It further contributes to the regional sustainable development in terms of food security and nutrition.

One of the daunting challenges of the world is to ensure food and nutrition security for the rapidly growing population, which is estimated to reach 9.6 billion by 2050. There is no exception for BIMSTEC region which is home to 22 % of the global population.

While appreciating the excellent work done by the BIMSTEC Expert Group Meeting on Agriculture, I am pleased to inform that Myanmar, as a Lead Country of the Agriculture sector, will host the first BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture in Myanmar in 2018/2019 to address the emerging challenges and further enhancement of the cooperation.

Most of the Member States in our region are blessed with abundance of energy resources including hydro power. However, ever-increasing demand of electric power is always higher than that of our supply. This situation requires us to enhance energy cooperation and energy trade among the Member States in filling the energy gap within our region.

The signing of MoA for the establishment for BIMSTEC Energy Centre in 2009 in Myanmar marked a significant achievement of BIMSTEC energy cooperation. Our continued cooperation is vital for the early operationalization of BIMSTEC Energy Center.

I am pleased to note that MoU for the establishment of BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection will be signed during this Summit. I firmly believe that it will be a framework for electricity inter-trade among the Member States.

Connectivity plays a key role to unlock the socio-economic development and ultimately the enhancement of regional integration. I am pleased to note, with satisfaction, on the progress achieved in preparation of the draft BIMSTEC Master Plan on Transport Connectivity. At this point, I would like to express our sincere appreciation for the support of ADB in formulating the Master Plan.

Despite significant achievements of the Member States, poverty still remains a challenge for all of us.

We therefore welcome the Colombo Statement on Poverty Alleviation adopted at Third BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation on 20 December 2017, which reaffirms our commitment to alleviate poverty in the BIMSTEC region to ensure dignity, improve the quality of life and well-being of the peoples.

On 5th July 2016, Myanmar deposited its Instrument of Ratification of the BIMSTEC Convention on Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking, which was signed in 2009.

I wish to underscore the importance of BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs Meeting as key components of the BIMSTEC's security cooperation, which provides platforms for strategic dialogue and practical cooperation for the BIMSTEC counter terrorism sector.

Myanmar took responsibility as a lead country of BIMSTEC Sub-group on Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursor Chemicals and hosted several meetings under BIMSTEC counter-terrorism and transnational crime framework.

Myanmar has been encountering the scourge of terrorism. Therefore, Myanmar attaches great importance to the issues of terrorism and trans-national crime, and assures its continued active cooperation under the BIMSTEC framework.

Trade and Investment

Although the BIMSTEC Free Trade Area Framework Agreement has been signed in 2004, we are still under negotiation in finalizing the constituent agreements. In the meantime, we should work together to promote trade and investment through exchange of trade and business delegations and organizing investment promotion events among the Member States.

Future Direction of BIMSTEC

The BIMSTEC mechanism, comprising of different layers of meetings, plays an important role for steering BIMSTEC activities. However, I am of the view that formulation of the Rules of Procedure of BIMSTEC mechanism would be a key to effective and efficient cooperation. We welcome the idea to draft the Rules of Procedure which would be a basis for formulation of the future BIMSTEC Charter.

Simultaneous implementation of 14+2 cooperation areas will not be feasible for BIMSTEC due to financial and resources constraints. Therefore, we have to prioritize some of our projects for effective implementation.

We understand that funding is a matter of concern for the mechanism. Therefore, we welcome the idea to explore the alternative financial resources for our cooperation. In the meantime, we should expand our engagements with the development partners for implementing our common projects.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our firm commitment to strengthen BIMSTEC cooperation towards “Peaceful, Prosperous and Sustainable Bay of Bengal Region”.

(Source: official website of the President of Myanmar

<http://www.president-office.gov.mm/en/?q=briefing-room/news/2018/08/31/id-8964>)