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Royal Government of Bhutan

PRIME MINISTER

Kuzuzangpo to everyone from Bhutan!

It is my honor to convey the warm greetings of His Majesty The King, Her Majesty The Queen and the people of Bhutan to all the Leaders and peoples of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Region on the historic occasion of our organization's 25th Anniversary.

25 years ago, in 1997, BIMSTEC was brought together by a common vision of a stable and prosperous region. I am pleased to note that BIMSTEC as an organization has grown and come this far. The 25th Anniversary now provides us all with an opportunity to celebrate our achievements, as well as reflect and review our traditional approach to cooperation. In this respect, I am happy that we were able to rationalize our areas of cooperation during the recent Summit, as I am confident it would give the much required focus and attention to priority areas of cooperation within our region. Bhutan was assigned the lead role for the Environment and Climate Change Sector of our region under the rationalized areas of cooperation. Addressing climate change is not a choice but a pivotal priority that needs collective and immediate action. As a doctor, I firmly believe climate change is like cancer and needs early identification and urgent treatment. In this regard, with the support and cooperation of fellow Member States, my government will take appropriate steps to realize the aspirations of our region under this particular sector of cooperation.

I am also pleased to highlight that we were able to sign the BIMSTEC Charter. The Charter establishes the legal and institutional framework for BIMSTEC and outlines how BIMSTEC as an inter-governmental regional organization would function. I am confident that it will give a much needed boost to strengthen our organization.

As home to around 22% of the global population, the economic and social wellbeing of our region is crucial not just for our region but for global progress as well. However, our region has been through two tumultuous years of the COVID-19 pandemic that has affected the lives and livelihoods of millions of people. It has



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exposed risks and vulnerabilities leaving us with more questions than answers. As our economies open and we move beyond our pandemic footing, we need a compelling narrative of positive change and resilient recovery in an increasingly fragile and uncertain world. I have no doubt that together we will come out of this pandemic stronger, and we will be able to accelerate our region's economic growth.

As for Bhutan, I am happy to share that we are blessed with the farsighted leadership of His Majesty The King. His Majesty's care and guidance is the biggest reason for Bhutan's success thus far. In addition, as my government looks beyond the pandemic phase, I am confidently counting on the friendship, camaraderie and support of fellow Member States!

On this joyous occasion for our region, I take the opportunity to pay tribute to all those who laid the foundation for the establishment of our regional association. As we journey together towards the next decade of friendship and cooperation, I affirm our determination and commitment to work even more closely with the Member States in elevating this partnership for a more promising future for our peoples, our region, and collective prosperity.

Tashi Delek!

(Dr Lotay Tshering)