



Secretariat
Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral
Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)

Secretary General

06 June 2021

MESSAGE

On this auspicious occasion of the 24th Anniversary of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), I extend my heartiest greetings and felicitations to the people and the Governments of the BIMSTEC Member States.

Since its inception on 6 June 1997 as a sub-regional cooperation platform, BIMSTEC has evolved into a successful regional organization. The close cooperation among the Member States has been enhanced, which is evident in the successful finalization of the components of BIMSTEC's core instruments.

The BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity has been approved by the 17th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting and it will be adopted by the 5th BIMSTEC Summit, which is expected to be held later this year. Successful implementation of this Master Plan will bring BIMSTEC much closer to achieve its goal of seamlessly connected Bay of Bengal region.

On this occasion, to enhance intra-regional trade and strengthen the economy and vibrancy of this region, I trust the Member States will be able to conclude the long cherished BIMSTEC Free Trade Area negotiations at the soonest. I would earnestly request Member States to step forward towards the goal of trade liberalization by concluding FTA before the 25th Anniversary of BIMSTEC next year.

Meanwhile, as we are witnessing an unprecedented situation in human history, my thoughts and prayers are with the people of the region who have lost their loved ones and are affected by the pandemic. Today, more than ever, inclusive and coordinated regional efforts are required to address a situation that exceeds the individual capacities of the Member States. It is heartening to see the BIMSTEC Member States work together to cope with the crises, while seeking to foster sustainable and resilient recovery from the pandemic. At the recent 17th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting held on 1st April 2021, the Member States also reiterated their commitment to strengthen cooperation on public health issues in the Bay of Bengal Region.

Let me also take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to the Government of Bangladesh for its initiative of constructing an iconic Secretariat building and for rendering administrative support and other services. I also thank Sri Lanka, the current Chair of BIMSTEC, for successfully holding a series of core meetings including the 17th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting. My deep gratitude is extended to all the other Member States as well for their continued support and contribution in taking the BIMSTEC agenda forward.

To conclude, the Secretariat reiterates its firm commitment to pursue the goals and visions of the Organization as envisaged by the BIMSTEC Leaders.

(Tenzin Lekphell)