



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

Secretary General



06 June 2020

MESSAGE

On the occasion of the Twenty-Third Anniversary of the establishment of BIMSTEC, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations and best wishes to the peoples and the Governments of the BIMSTEC Member States – Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. My thoughts and prayers are with those who have lost their near and dear ones due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) was established on 06 June 1997 to accelerate economic development and social progress in the countries adjacent to the Bay of Bengal by leveraging geographical proximity and abundant natural resources. Since its inception, BIMSTEC has been actively promoting physical and economic connectivity in the region through trade, transport, tourism, technology and energy cooperation. BIMSTEC is also mandated to promote collective action to address vulnerabilities like climate change, natural disasters, food security, terrorism, transnational crimes and communicable diseases.

Like most other countries of the world, BIMSTEC countries' initial response to the COVID 19 pandemic was to restrict trade, travel and other forms of connectivity. It is heartening to see that they are increasingly opening up trade and transport connectivity to restore essential supply chains. BIMSTEC Leaders are putting renewed emphasis on developing regional transport connectivity resilient to disruptions caused by future pandemic or other calamities with particular focus on coastal shipping, waterways and railways. The economic gains registered by BIMSTEC countries are constantly being threatened by natural disasters, climate change, pandemics, poverty and economic disparity. As we prepare for the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit later this year in Colombo, our Leaders are expected to provide clear directives to invest more to ensure human security. Already, the Member States have expressed their resolve to strengthen cooperation in the area of agriculture and food security.

I wish to record my sincere gratitude to Bangladesh for providing continued support to the Secretariat since its establishment in 2014. I also register my sincere thanks to Sri Lanka, the current Chair of BIMSTEC, for successfully holding a series of important meetings including the 20th Session of BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting early 2020. I express my deep appreciation to all other Member States for their active participation and continued support in advancing the mandate of the organization.

I wish to take this opportunity to reaffirm the Secretariat's commitment to work closely with the Member States in fulfilling the goals set by the BIMSTEC Leaders. I am confident that the existing close cooperation among the Member States will be further strengthened in the years to come for the benefit of 1.6 billion population of this region.

(M Shahidul Islam)