



## **Message**

It is with great pleasure I extend my greetings and good wishes, as well as the people and the Government of Sri Lanka, on the happy occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

BIMSTEC, since its inception two decades ago, has provided a platform to draw on our respective strengths and expertise and share these experiences among us. Our collaborations have helped to build innovative and flexible partnerships which I strongly believe will pave the way for realizing great economic benefits.

Further, our regional integration has offered many opportunities and benefits under the BIMSTEC umbrella facilitating an important trade link within member countries, especially between South Asia and South East Asia. In this regard, we believe the proposed Agreement on the BIMSTEC Free Trade Area will be immensely helpful in creating new opportunities for our nations.

At this historic moment, I also wish to recall the collective decision taken at the BIMSTEC Leaders' Retreat in Goa last year where it was envisaged to focus on the challenges of climate change, regional integration and explore opportunities through blue and mountain economies. Sri Lanka remains firmly supportive of these endeavours.

Moreover, as the lead country, in the Technology Sector in BIMSTEC, Sri Lanka will continue to actively participate and add value to the initiative.

I wish to assure that Sri Lanka remains strongly committed to strengthening and advancing the BIMSTEC process that will enhance the prosperity of the peoples in the region.

**Maithripala Sirisena**  
**President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka**

**06 June 2017**