



**MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF BIMSTEC
ON THE OCCASION OF THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF BIMSTEC**

On the occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Establishment of BIMSTEC, I wish to extend my heartiest felicitations to the peoples of the Bay of Bengal region and the Governments of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

It was two decades ago, on 06 June 1997, the BIMSTEC started its journey through the Bangkok Declaration. The BIMSTEC constitutes a bridge between South Asia and South East Asia.

The most important landmarks of BIMSTEC in its twenty years journey were the establishment of the Permanent Secretariat in Dhaka and conclusion of the Headquarters Agreement with the Government of Bangladesh. I wish to record my deep gratitude to the Government of Bangladesh for facilitating the operationalisation of the Secretariat and its continued support.

The Secretariat reiterates its constant commitment to pursue the goals and visions of the Organization as envisaged in the Bangkok Declaration of 1997. Since the operationalisation of the Permanent Secretariat, it has been acting as a catalyst in implementing the initiatives related to the 14 priority areas of cooperation by way of effective facilitation and coordination.

I also express my deep gratitude to the Member States for their continued support and contribution towards achieving the goals of BIMSTEC through enabling the organization to become more effective and result oriented.

As the BIMSTEC is entering into its third decade, it would be appropriate to step forward towards its goal of trade liberalization by operationalizing the BIMSTEC Free Trade Area that will ensure a shared economic prosperity for the people of the region.

It is my fervent hope that the BIMSTEC Member States would look for innovative means to engage more effectively with each other ensuring deepening the regional cooperation and integration in the Bay of Bengal region.

Our priorities have become clearer as directed by the Leaders of BIMSTEC at the BIMSTEC Leaders' Retreat held in Goa, India on 16 October 2016, to work for regional peace and strengthen resilience in the Bay of Bengal region, as well as to promote BIMSTEC as a model of regionalism and as a effective global player. It is important to note that our Leaders at their Retreat, pledged to work closely towards making BIMSTEC stronger, more effective, and results oriented.

I am convinced that together it is possible to achieve the goals set by the Leaders of BIMSTEC which will build a strong, interconnected, cooperative and prosperous Bay of Bengal region.

It would be pertinent to remind ourselves that the Bay of Bengal was once a region at the heart of global history. I am confident that we will be able to rediscover this past heritage through BIMSTEC.

On the occasion of the commemoration of Twentieth Anniversary of the Establishment of BIMSTEC, I would like to call upon all the Member States to work more closely with determination to strengthening the organization in delivering some tangible results which are pragmatic and sustainable in realizing aspirations of the peoples of the Bay of Bengal region.

(Sumith Nakandala)
Secretary General of BIMSTEC