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**SECRETARIAT**  
**BAY OF BENGAL INITIATIVE FOR MULTI-SECTORAL**  
**TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION**  
**DHAKA**

**Twenty Fourth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM)**  
**19 December 2024**  
**Bangkok, Thailand [Virtual]**

**Report of the Twenty Fourth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting**

**Agenda Item 01: Opening of the Meeting**

01. The Twenty Fourth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) was held virtually in Bangkok, Thailand, on 19 December 2024.

02. Delegations from the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the Kingdom of Bhutan, the Republic of India, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Nepal, the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and the Kingdom of Thailand participated in the Meeting. The list of the participants is at **Annex I**.

03. In his Opening Remarks, **H.E. Mr. Paisan Rupanichkij**, Deputy Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand cordially welcomed all distinguished delegates to the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting being held virtually. He mentioned that considerable progress had been made since Thailand took over the BIMSTEC Chairmanship, i.e., finalization of the Rules of Procedure for BIMSTEC mechanisms, Report of the Eminent Persons' Group on Future Direction of BIMSTEC etc. He hoped that BIMSTEC would emerge as a visible and significant force in global cooperation. The full text of the Opening Remarks is at **Annex II**.

04. In his Special Remarks, **Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey**, Secretary General BIMSTEC, welcomed the distinguished delegates to the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting. He assured the Meeting of the Secretariat's full support and cooperation.

## **Agenda Item 02: Election of the Chairperson**

05. As per the Rules of Procedure of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting, **H.E. Mr. Paisan Rupanichkij**, Deputy Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand and Head of Delegation of the Chair member State of BIMSTEC, was elected as the Chair of the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of BIMSTEC SOM by acclamation. The Chair thanked all the delegates for their participation in the Meeting and briefed the delegations on the matters pertaining to the conduct of the Meeting.

## **Agenda Item 03: Adoption of the Agenda**

06. The Meeting decided to delete the agenda item 14 from the draft Provisional Agenda, as proposed by India, and adopted the Agenda, as amended, which is at **Annex III**.

## **Agenda Item 04: General Statement on the progress in regional cooperation in various Sectors and Sub-sectors by the respective Lead Countries**

07. Upon request by the Chair, the Lead member States in alphabetical order, delivered Statements on the progress in regional cooperation within BIMSTEC framework in Sectors and sub-Sectors, they lead. The Statements of the member States are annexed as follows:

- |     |            |                   |
|-----|------------|-------------------|
| (a) | Bangladesh | <b>Annex IV</b>   |
| (b) | Bhutan     | <b>Annex V</b>    |
| (c) | India      | <b>Annex VI</b>   |
| (d) | Myanmar    | <b>Annex VII</b>  |
| (e) | Nepal      | <b>Annex VIII</b> |
| (f) | Sri Lanka  | <b>Annex IX</b>   |
| (g) | Thailand   | <b>Annex X</b>    |

08. The Meeting took note of the Statements delivered by the Lead member States on the progress in the Sectors and sub-Sectors they lead.

## **Agenda Item 05: Report of the Secretary General on the work of the Organization and review of the progress since the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) held virtually in Bangkok, Thailand, on 08 March 2023**

09. The Meeting took note of the Secretary General's Report on the work of the Organization and progress since the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) held virtually in Bangkok, Thailand, on 08 March 2023, as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/24/2024/02/Rev.2**, which is at **Annex XI**.

10. The Meeting thanked the Secretary General for his detailed statement. The Meeting tasked the next Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC) to discuss the observations and recommendations of the Secretary General's statement and make suitable recommendations to the next Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting for consideration. The full text of Secretary General's statement is at **Annex XII**.

**Agenda Item 06: Consideration of the Reports of the Meetings held since 19<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting**

***Environment & Climate Change***

**06.1 Report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on Environment and Climate Change held in Paro, Bhutan, on 12 October 2023**

11. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on Environment and Climate Change held in Paro, Bhutan, on 12 October 2023 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/24/2024/03**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

**06.2 Report of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on Environment and Climate Change held in Thimphu, Bhutan, on 28-29 November 2024**

12. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on Environment and Climate Change held in Paro, Bhutan, on 28-29 November 2024 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/24/2024/04**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

***Security***

**06.3 Report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Himalayan Science Council held virtually in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 26 July 2023**

13. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Himalayan Science Council held virtually in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 26 July 2023 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/24/2024/05**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

**06.4 Minutes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Governing Board of BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate held in Noida, India, on 13 December 2023**

14. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Minutes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Governing Board of BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate held in Noida, India, on 13 December 2023 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/24/2024/06**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

**06.5 Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Governing Board of BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate held virtually in Noida, India, on 01 February 2024**

15. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Governing Board of BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate held virtually in Noida, India, on 01 February 2024 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/24/2024/07**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

*People-to-People Contact*

**06.6 Report of the Special Session of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (S-BNPTT) held virtually in Bangkok, Thailand, on 08-09 May 2023**

16. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the Special Session of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (S-BNPTT) held virtually in Bangkok, Thailand, on 08-09 May 2023 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/24/2024/08**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

**06.7 Report of the 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (BNPTT) held virtually in Yangon, Myanmar, on 09-10 July 2024**

17. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (BNPTT) held virtually in Yangon, Myanmar, on 09-10 July 2024 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/24/2024/09**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

**06.7bis Report of the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Visa Matters held in Kathmandu, Nepal, on 20-21 November 2024**

18. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Visa Matters held in Kathmandu, Nepal, on 20-21 November 2024 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/24/2024/09bis**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

## *Science, Technology & Innovation*

### **06.8 Report of the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Technology held virtually in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 21 June 2023**

19. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Technology held virtually in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 21 June 2023 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/24/2024/10**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

### **06.9 Report of the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Public Health held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 26-27 July 2023**

20. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Public Health held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 26-27 July 2023 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/24/2024/11**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

### **06.10 Report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 25-26 July 2024**

21. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 25-26 July 2024 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/24/2024/12**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

### **06.11 Report of the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Human Resource Development held virtually in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 21-22 August 2024**

22. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Human Resource Development held virtually in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 21-22 August 2024 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/24/2024/13**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

## *Connectivity*

### **06.12 Report of the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Working Group (BTCWG) held virtually in Bangkok, Thailand, on 20 March 2023**

23. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Working Group (BTCWG) held virtually in Bangkok, Thailand, on 20 March 2023 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/24/2024/14**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

## *Core Mechanisms*

### **06.13 Report of the Special Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (S-BPWC) held in Paro, Bhutan, on 05-06 October 2023**

24. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the Special Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (S-BPWC) held in Paro, Bhutan, on 05-06 October 2023 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/24/2024/15**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

### **06.14 Report of the 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC) held virtually in Bangkok, Thailand, on 01 August 2024**

25. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Report of the 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC) held virtually in Bangkok, Thailand, on 01 August 2024 as contained in the Secretariat's Document Number **BIMSTEC/SOM/24/2024/16**, along with the recommendations contained therein.

#### **Agenda Item 07: Consideration of the finalized Draft Terms of Reference (ToR) of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation**

26. The Meeting considered and endorsed the finalized Draft Terms of Reference (ToR) of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation, which is at **Annex XIII**, for submission to the Twentieth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for approval.

#### **Agenda Item 08: Consideration of the finalized Draft BIMSTEC Plan of Action (PoA) on Science, Technology and Innovation (2023-2027)**

27. The Meeting considered and endorsed the finalized Draft BIMSTEC Plan of Action (PoA) on Science, Technology and Innovation (2023-2027), which is at **Annex XIV**, for submission to the Twentieth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for approval.

#### **Agenda Item 09: Consideration of the finalized Draft Terms of Reference (ToR) of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Public Health**

28. The Meeting considered and endorsed the finalized Draft Terms of Reference (ToR) of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Public Health, which is at **Annex XV**, for submission to the Twentieth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for approval.

**Agenda Item 10: Consideration of the Institutional Arrangement for Financial Support from the World Bank for Implementation of the BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Public Health 2023-2025**

29. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Institutional Arrangement for Financial Support from the World Bank for Implementation of the BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Public Health 2023-2025, which is at **Annex XVI**, for Ministerial approval by circulation.

**Agenda Item 11: Consideration of the finalized Draft Terms of Reference (ToR) of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Human Resource Development**

30. The Meeting considered and endorsed the finalized Draft Terms of Reference (ToR) of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Human Resource Development, which is at **Annex XVII**, for submission to the Twentieth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for approval.

**Agenda Item 12: Consideration of the finalized Draft BIMSTEC Plan of Action (PoA) on Human Resource Development**

31. The Meeting considered and endorsed the finalized Draft BIMSTEC Plan of Action (PoA) on Human Resource Development, which is at **Annex XVIII**, for submission to the Twentieth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for approval.

**Agenda Item 13: Consideration of the finalized Draft Concept Note on Potential Areas of Cooperation, Plan of Action and Action Matrix on Environment and Climate Change**

32. The Meeting considered and endorsed the finalized Concept Note on Potential Areas of Cooperation on Environment and Climate Change; BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Environment and Climate Change; and Action Matrix on BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Environment and Climate Change, which are at **Annex XIX-XXI** respectively, for submission to the Twentieth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for approval.

**Agenda Item 14: Consideration of the finalized Draft Concept Note and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the BIMSTEC**

33. The Meeting took note of the finalized Draft Concept Note and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the BIMSTEC, which is at **Annex XXII** and deferred its decision.

34. The Meeting tasked the BPWC to reconsider the Draft Concept Note and MoU between the UNOPS and the BIMSTEC and make appropriate recommendations to the next session of BIMSTEC SOM taking into account the views of the member States.

**Agenda Item 15: Consideration of the finalized Draft Concept Note and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the BIMSTEC**

35. The Meeting took note of the endorsement of Senior Officials of the finalized Draft Concept Note and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the BIMSTEC through correspondence, which is at **Annex XXIII**.

36. The Delegation of Thailand informed that it would convey to the Secretariat its Ministerial approval of the MoU between the IORA and the BIMSTEC after completion of the due process.

37. Sri Lanka also proposed the signing of the MoU to be held during the next Ministerial Meeting of IORA in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

**Agenda Item 16: Consideration of the finalized Draft Concept Note on BIMSTEC Home Ministers' Meeting**

38. The Meeting considered and endorsed the finalized Draft Concept Note on BIMSTEC Home Ministers' Meeting, which is at **Annex XXIV**. The Secretariat will seek approval of the Ministers of the remaining member States, through circulation, enabling convening of the First Home Ministers Meeting as soon as possible.

**Agenda Item 17: Consideration of the finalized Draft Concept Note on Establishment of BIMSTEC Expert Group on Fiscal and Monetary Policy**

39. The Meeting considered and endorsed the finalized Draft Concept Note on Establishment of BIMSTEC Expert Group on Fiscal and Monetary Policy, which is at **Annex XXV**. The Secretariat will seek approval of the Ministers, through circulation, in order to convene the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Fiscal and Monetary Policy as soon as possible. The Meeting took note of the proposal of Thailand for convening a meeting of the relevant officials from the Ministries of Finance and Central Banks in order to decide on the scope of work and Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Expert Group.

**Agenda Item 18: Consideration of the finalized Draft Concept Paper titled 'Proposal for the Himalayan Science Council (HSC) under the BIMSTEC'**

40. The Meeting discussed on the finalized Draft Concept Paper titled 'Proposal for the Himalayan Science Council (HSC) under the BIMSTEC', which is at **Annex XXVI**.



41. The Meeting decided that the remaining member States will convey their concurrences taking into account the comments by Myanmar and Thailand on the finalized Draft Concept Paper.

**Agenda Item 19: Consideration of the Rules of Procedure (RoP) for BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate**

42. The Meeting considered and endorsed the Rules of Procedure (RoP) for BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate, which is at **Annex XXVII**, for submission to the Twentieth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for approval.

**Agenda Item 20: Consideration of the Draft Concept Note on BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence on Tropical Medicine and Public Health**

43. The Meeting expressed its appreciation of Thailand for preparing the Draft Concept Note on BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence on Tropical Medicine and Public Health, which is at **Annex XXVIII**.

44. The remaining member States were requested to convey their comments/ concurrence on the Draft Concept Note on BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence on Tropical Medicine and Public Health at the earliest.

**Agenda Item 21: Consideration of the Draft Concept Note for the BIMSTEC Excellence Center in Public Audit (BECPA) and the Draft Concept Note for Supreme Audit Institutions in BIMSTEC Cooperation (BIMSCOP) under the Bangkok Vision 2030**

45. The Meeting expressed its appreciation of Thailand for preparing the Draft Concept Note for the BIMSTEC Excellence Center in Public Audit (BECPA) and the Draft Concept Note for Supreme Audit Institutions in BIMSTEC Cooperation (BIMSCOP) under the Bangkok Vision 2030 and took note of them.

46. The member States were requested by Thailand to convey their comments/concurrences on the Draft Concept Note for the BIMSTEC Excellence Center in Public Audit (BECPA) [**Annex XXIX**] and the Draft Concept Note for Supreme Audit Institutions in BIMSTEC Cooperation (BIMSCOP) under the Bangkok Vision 2030 [**Annex XXX**], latest by 11 January 2025 as proposed by Thailand.

**Agenda Item 22: Consideration of the Draft Concept Note on Permanent Observer Status of BIMSTEC at the United Nations (UN)**

47. The Meeting took note of the Draft Concept Note on Permanent Observer Status of BIMSTEC at the United Nations, which is at **Annex XXXI**.

48. The remaining member States were requested to convey their comments/ concurrence on the Draft Concept Note on Permanent Observer Status of BIMSTEC at the United Nations at the earliest.

**Agenda Item 23: Consideration of the Draft Concept Note on Cooperation between Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**

49. The Meeting took note of the Draft Concept Note on Cooperation between BIMSTEC and ASEAN, which is at **Annex XXXII**.

50. The remaining member States were requested to convey their comments/ concurrence on the Draft Concept Note on Cooperation between BIMSTEC and ASEAN at the earliest.

**Agenda Item 24: Discussion on the Report of the Eminent Persons' Group (EPG) on the Future Direction of BIMSTEC**

51. The Meeting took note of the Report of the Eminent Persons' Group (EPG) on the Future Direction of BIMSTEC taking into account the proposals/observations of the Secretariat/Secretary General of BIMSTEC, which is at **Annex XXXIII**.

52. The Meeting decided to convene a Special Meeting of the BPWC to consider the Report of EPG on the Future Direction of BIMSTEC and present its recommendations to the Senior Officials of the member States. The Delegation of Thailand, informed the Meeting that Thailand will convene the Special Meeting of the BPWC on a date to be agreed by the member States.

**Agenda Item 25: Updates on the dates of the 6<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Summit and 20<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting.**

53. The Delegation of Thailand informed the Meeting that Thailand had already announced the dates of the 6<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Summit and its preceding Meetings to be held in Bangkok on 02-04 April 2025. The Delegation also informed that Thailand would host the 'BIMSTEC Young GEN Forum: Where the Future Meets' on the sidelines of the 6<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Summit.

**Agenda Item 26: Consideration of the finalized Draft Audit Procedure of the BIMSTEC Secretariat**

54. The Meeting considered and endorsed the finalized Draft Audit Procedure of the BIMSTEC Secretariat, which is at **Annex XXXIV**, for submission to the Twentieth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for approval.

55. The Meeting took note of the request of the Secretary General to mandate the next Audit Team to complete, in 2025, the external audit of the Secretariat's accounts for FY 2016 to FY 2024.

**Agenda Item 27: Consideration of the Secretariat's estimated budget for FY 2025**

56. The Meeting took note of and concurred on the Secretariat's estimated budget of US\$ 1,976,377.20 for FY 2025, which is at **Annex XXXV**.

**Agenda Item 28: Any Other Matters**

57. Under this agenda item, no matter was raised.

**Agenda Item 29: Date and Venue of the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting**

58. The delegation of Thailand briefed the Meeting on convening the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting on 02 April 2025 in Bangkok back-to-back with the Twentieth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting and Sixth BIMSTEC Summit. The Delegation also informed that the logistical details will be circulated in due course upon receipt of the concurrences from all the Member States.

**Agenda Item 30: Consideration and Adoption of the Report of the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting**

59. The Meeting considered and adopted the Report of the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting for submission to the Twentieth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting proposed to be held in Bangkok, Thailand, on 03 April 2025.

**Agenda Item 31: Closing of the Meeting**

60. The Heads of Delegations of the Member States conveyed their deep appreciation and gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand for hosting the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting. The Chair thanked all Delegations for their valuable contributions and active participation. The Meeting expressed its appreciation of the Chair for his able stewardship in steering the Meeting.

61. The Meeting also thanked the Secretariat for their contribution in facilitating the Meeting.

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