His Excellency Mr. Don Pramudwinai,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand and
Chairman of the 19th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting
Hon’ble Foreign Ministers of BIMSTEC Member States
BIMSTEC Secretary General
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

A very good afternoon to you all.

Please allow me to begin by congratulating H. E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai Foreign Minister of Thailand for assuming the Chairmanship of the 19th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting. I take this opportunity to convey my sincere thanks and deep appreciation to the Government of Thailand for all the arrangements made for the virtual meeting and also for playing the leading role in efficiently running the BIMSTEC chairmanship for the last one year. I would also like to thank the Secretary General for his effective leadership since joining the BIMSTEC Secretariat.

Mr. Chairman,

02. The Bay of Bengal region comprising two vibrant areas of South Asia and South East Asia has huge potentials for forging substantive multi-sectoral cooperation for the socio-economic development of the people. Our father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was an ardent proponent of regional cooperation and envisioned closer cooperation among the countries of the region for the socio-economic emancipation of the people. As one of the founding members of BIMSTEC, Bangladesh remains committed to the progress and prosperity of our peoples through BIMSTEC based collaboration.

Mr. Chairman,

03. The world is going through immense economic uncertainties at the moment. While our countries are trying to overcome the unprecedented consequences of the Covid-19, the Ukraine war and sanctions have brought new challenges for us. We need to enhance our cooperation to face these challenges.
Mr. Chairman,

04. Our meeting today provides us with an opportunity to take stock of what we have achieved since the 5th BIMSTEC Summit held in Colombo in March 2022. During the Summit, several important instruments including the BIMSTEC Charter was signed. Now the Rules of Procedure for BIMSTEC mechanisms are also finalized. I am confident that these Rules of Procedure along with the Charter will greatly contribute in strengthening the BIMSTEC process.

Excellencies,

05. Trade and Investment is one of the most critical sectors of BIMSTEC cooperation. Given the evolving financial situation worldwide we need to vigorously pursue the promotion of trade and investment within the region on a priority basis. As the lead country of the sector, Bangladesh is committed to completing the negotiations and finalisation of the constituent agreements of the BIMSTEC FTA as early as possible. But to reach the goal we need active support and cooperation from the member states. I call upon all my distinguished colleagues to extend their support and cooperation in finalising the agreements without further delay.

06. I also take this opportunity to thank the Member States for including Blue Economy under Trade and Investment sector.

Mr. Chairman,

07. Energy sector is another sector of cooperation with huge potentials. I believe that the MOU on BIMSTEC GRID Interconnection, signed at the 4th BIMSTEC Summit in 2018, could be the platform in enhancing our cooperation in this sector.

08. BIMSTEC Master Plan for Connectivity was approved by our leaders during the 5th Summit. Unfortunately, there has not been much progress on the implementation of the Master Plan. I would like to stress on its early implementation for the benefit of the people of the region.

09. I am happy to note that the Draft Text of the Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation has already been endorsed by the Senior Officials’ Meeting (SOM). I believe that this document will greatly contribute to enhancing connectivity within the region.
Mr. Chairman,

10. Poverty is our common enemy in the region. A large number of our population still lives in poverty. We need to finalise the ‘BIMSTEC Poverty Plan of Action’ as soon as possible.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. There is no alternative to peace and stability for development. We have to protect and secure our development and prosperity by forging cooperation in combating terrorism and other security threats. As a lead shepherd, Bangladesh will host the First Meeting of BIMSTEC Sub-group on Human Trafficking in Dhaka on 19-21 March 2023.

Mr. Chairman,

12. We welcome the ‘BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030’. The Bangkok Vision sets a clear direction and priorities as well as a goal for BIMSTEC collaboration to tackle challenges and seize opportunities for the coming decade.

13. We appreciate the finalization of the Terms of Reference of the Eminent Persons’ Group (EPG) on the future directions of BIMSTEC. We hope that the EPG would be able to start their deliberations soon and put forward their recommendations preferably before the 6th Summit.

14. Last but not the least, I would like to reiterate that preparing of ‘Action Plan’ by the lead countries for all the reconstituted 7 areas of cooperation in BIMSTEC would be very effective and relevant for fast forwarding the BIMSTEC process.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

15. Before I conclude, I would like to urge upon the distinguished delegates of the Member States to renew their pledge for working closely towards building a new BIMSTEC, which would be an efficient, high performing and result oriented organization.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.
Long Live the BIMSTEC Spirit.
Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu