Agenda Item 1: Opening and Welcome Statement by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand

1. It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the 19th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting. I would like to begin my Remarks by thanking the Senior Officials and the Secretary General for the kind preparation leading up to our Meeting today.

2. BIMSTEC has matured as an institution. But we need to remain relevant and become an effective actor in the region with a shared strategic vision. One that can play a leading role in promoting a safe, stable and secure Bay of Bengal. One that decisively and substantially contributes to the global progress in human development, green development, and food and energy security. And one that exemplifies a successful South-South Cooperation towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. Years of national development strategies focusing on increasing GDP figures has brought us to a crossroads. The unprecedented economic impact by COVID-19 and the prevailing global situation have brought to the fore the need for economic growth that is sustainable, inclusive and balanced.
4. To move the region towards a forward-looking trajectory for sustainable and balanced growth, Thailand has put forth an agenda to drive BIMSTEC towards a region that is Prosperous, Resilient and Open. This is encapsulated in the draft text of the Bangkok Vision 2030 that we will deliberate today and submit to our Leaders for adoption.

5. In exploring new and innovative forms of cooperation, BIMSTEC can benefit from our collective strengths and achievements made by each Member State towards realizing the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals. These goals include actions to mitigate climate change, responsible consumption and production, quality education and poverty reduction. We can learn more from each other through technical cooperation and exchanges of best practices, to accelerate our efforts to build our resiliency and improve the well-being of our peoples.

6. As the host economy of APEC Economic Leaders Meeting last November, Thailand advocates the application of the Bio, Circular and Green Economy Model towards the post-COVID-19 economic recovery in the Asia-Pacific region, in a responsible and sustainable manner. We believe that BIMSTEC, too, needs to reframe our development policies to
achieve a more sustainable future. For example, use of renewable energy and biomass energy can help us achieve our environmental commitments. That is the front and center of Thailand’s priority as Chair of BIMSTEC.

Excellencies,

7. I would like to applaud our previous Chair, Sri Lanka, for leading us through an extremely challenging time at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially despite the economic difficulties your country was facing – which was a stark reminder of the great many uncertainties in such a volatile world. Recovery from such an economic hardship can be a long, and at times painful, process; but I do have a firm conviction that collectively, as an institution, BIMSTEC possess enough tools to help Member States in time of need. Therefore, Thailand is willing to put extra efforts to make sure that we continue to prioritize strengthening BIMSTEC as a vibrant and impactful institution. And I am pleased to note the progress made this year as we will be submitting the draft text of the Rules of Procedures for BIMSTEC Mechanism, which are documents developed under the BIMSTEC Charter, for our Leaders’ adoption. The adoption of these documents will be an
important step forward to making BIMSTEC a more effective and result-oriented organization.

8. With that spirit in mind, let us use this opportunity to reflect on our progress thus far and chart the way forward to improve the well-being of our peoples and the prosperity of our region.