

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

REPORT OF THE 14TH SESSION OF BIMSTEC SENIOR OFFICIALS' MEETING 10 DECEMBER 2009, NAY PYI TAW

I. Opening of the Meeting

1. The Fourteenth BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) was held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar on 10 December 2009. Delegates from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand attended the Meeting. The list of participants is at **Annex-I**.
2. SOM was co-chaired by H.E. Ms. Latha Reddy, Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and U Thant Kyaw, Director-General, International Organizations and Economic Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Union of Myanmar. Co-chair H.E. Ms. Latha Reddy opened the Meeting.

II. Adoption of the Agenda

3. The agenda as adopted by the Meeting is at **Annex-II**.

III. Business Arrangements

4. The Meeting took note of the programme and business arrangements made for the 14th SOM.

IV. Report of the Chairperson of the BIMSTEC Working Group (BWG)

5. The Report of the Chairperson of the BIMSTEC Working Group (BWG) was presented by H.E. Ms. Latha Reddy, Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs of India. The report is at **Annex-III**.
6. The Meeting took note of the report of the Working Group. It recognized the efficient manner in which the Working Group coordinated the work of BIMSTEC. It also expressed appreciation to the Chairperson for her able leadership and to Thailand for its invaluable support to the work of the Working Group.

V. Report of the Lead Countries on the priority sectors

7. The Lead Countries presented progress reports on the activities in the priority sectors of cooperation. SOM noted with appreciation the reports submitted by Lead Countries of the Priority Areas and welcomed the offer of Bangladesh to be the Lead Country for Climate Change. SOM urged the Lead Countries to continue their efforts for furthering the work of BIMSTEC in their respective focus areas.

Areas of Cooperation	Lead Country
1. Trade and Investment	Bangladesh
2. Technology	Sri Lanka
3. Energy	Myanmar
4. Transport and Communication	India
5. Tourism	India
6. Fisheries	Thailand
7. Agriculture	Myanmar
8. Cultural Cooperation	Bhutan
9. Environment and Disaster Management	India
10. Public Health	Thailand
11. People-to-People Contact	Thailand
12. Poverty Alleviation	Nepal
13. Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime	India
14. Climate Change	Bangladesh

Trade and Investment

8. SOM welcomed the finalization of the text of the Agreement on Trade in Goods under BIMSTEC FTA and other provisions relating to the Rules of Origin, Operational Certification Procedures and the Agreement on Customs Cooperation. SOM also welcomed the offer of India to host the 19th meeting of the Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC) and urged the TNC to finalize the Annexes to the Agreement on Trade in Goods.
9. SOM also took note of the progress on the negotiations on Agreement on Trade in Services and Investment.

Technology

10. SOM took note of the revised Concept Paper circulated by Sri Lanka on the BIMSTEC Technology Transfer/Exchange Facility in accordance with the decision of the 2nd Summit.

Energy

11. SOM noted Thailand's suggestion that the Memorandum of Association (MoA) for the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Energy Centre, which was finalized and approved at the 10th Ministerial Meeting be signed at the 2nd BIMSTEC Energy Ministers Meeting proposed to be hosted by Thailand on 4-5 March 2010.

Transport and Communication

12. SOM noted that all Member States have since endorsed the BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistics Study (BTILS) conducted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and recommended that the Chair of BIMSTEC communicate this decision to the ADB. It was also recommended that BIMSTEC Working Group in Bangkok liaise with ADB to initiate further steps in this regard.

Tourism

13. SOM took note that the 10th Ministerial Meeting decided to constitute the Tourism Working Group to implement the tourism cooperation programmes and follow-up on the Plan of Action, and welcomed India's offer to hold the 1st meeting of the Tourism Working Group.

Fisheries

14. SOM took note that a BIMSTEC meeting on sustainable fisheries in the Bay of Bengal was hosted by Thailand in Bangkok in January 2009.

Agriculture

15. SOM expressed hope that the 3rd Expert Group meeting would be held at an early date. SOM also noted that some countries had responded to Myanmar's request for information about contact officers from each

country under each of the areas of agricultural cooperation and urged the countries which had not yet done so to provide the requested information.

Cultural Cooperation

16. SOM urged the early signing of the MoU on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission (BCIC) and BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory (BCIO) by all BIMSTEC Member States.

Environment and Disaster Management

17. SOM urged the early signing of the Memorandum of Association (MoA) for the Establishment of BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate.

Public Health

18. SOM took note that the 2nd Summit Declaration announced cooperation in traditional medicine through setting up of the BIMSTEC network of national centres of traditional medicine and welcomed Thailand's offer to host the 2nd BIMSTEC Meeting on the Network of National Centres of Coordination in Traditional Medicine in Bangkok. SOM took note of India's ongoing programme of granting scholarships to nationals from BIMSTEC countries to study in India in the fields of traditional medicine.

People-to-People Contact

19. SOM took note of the 2nd Summit Declaration that India would set up a BIMSTEC network of policy think tanks. SOM welcomed India's proposal to host the 1st Meeting of the BIMSTEC network of policy think tanks in February 2010.
20. SOM also took note that Thailand in June 2009 had organized an event to mark the 12th anniversary of the formation of BIMSTEC.
21. SOM recommended that Member States observe the BIMSTEC Day (6 June) annually to create greater public awareness about BIMSTEC.

Poverty Alleviation

22. SOM took note of the Plan of Action circulated by Nepal and requested Member States to send their comments as soon as possible. SOM welcomed the offer of Nepal to host the 2nd BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation in 2010.
23. SOM also took note of the decision to establish the BIMSTEC Poverty Alleviation Centre in Bangladesh as a step forward for the realization of the MDGs in the BIMSTEC region.

Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime

24. SOM noted with satisfaction that all Member States were ready to sign the BIMSTEC Convention on Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking at the Ministerial Meeting on 11 December 2009.

Climate Change

25. SOM noted that the 13th BIMSTEC SOM recommended and the 11th Ministerial Meeting had endorsed inclusion of Climate Change as the 14th priority area of cooperation as proposed by Bangladesh. SOM recommended designating Bangladesh to be the Lead Country for this area of cooperation.

VI. Other Issues

Establishment of the BIMSTEC Secretariat

26. SOM took note of the progress made by the Joint Working Group (JWG) on the establishment of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat and urged the Group to conclude its work as mandated by the 10th Ministerial Meeting.
27. SOM recalled the decision of the 2nd BIMSTEC Summit to establish a Permanent Secretariat for BIMSTEC. SOM also recalled the Report of the 11th Ministerial Meeting that a decision on the location of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat would be taken at the 12th Ministerial Meeting.

BIMSTEC Official Website

28. SOM welcomed inputs of new ideas and suggestions from member countries into the BIMSTEC website and called on all members to post BIMSTEC related developments in their countries on the website.

BIMSTEC Business Visa Scheme

29. SOM took note of the progress made by the Expert Group with regard to BIMSTEC Business Visa Scheme and BIMSTEC Visa Exemption Scheme and called upon the Group to convene its next meeting at the earliest with a view to completing discussions on the issue.

Depository of Legal Documents

30. SOM recognized that the Permanent Secretariat would act as the Depository of all BIMSTEC legal documents. SOM recommended that the original legal documents meant for the Secretariat shall be deposited with the Chair until the Permanent Secretariat is established.

VII. Consideration and adoption of the SOM Report

31. The SOM considered and approved by consensus the above report of the 14th BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting held in Nay Pyi Taw on 10 December 2009.

VIII. Expression of Thanks

32. Heads of SOM Delegation expressed their deep appreciation to the Government of the Union of Myanmar for the warm reception and gracious hospitality extended to the delegations and excellent arrangements made for the Meeting.

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10 December 2009.

14th BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting
10 December 2009, Nay Pyi Taw,
Union of Myanmar

List of Participants

1. H.E. (Ms.) Latha Reddy, Deputy Minister, Ministry of External Affairs, India (Co-Chair)
2. Mr. Thant Kyaw, Director General, International Organizations and Economic Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Myanmar (Co-Chair)
3. Mr. Mohamed Mijarul Quayes, Foreign Secretary, Bangladesh
4. Mr. Thinley Penjor, Foreign Secretary, Bhutan
5. Mr. Vinod Kumar, Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, India
6. Mr. Nyunt Swe, Deputy Director General, International Organizations and Economic Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Myanmar
7. Mr. Khaganath Adhikari, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nepal
8. Mrs. Pamela J. Deen, Additional Secretary (East Asia and Pacific), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka
9. Mrs. Chitriya Pinthong, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand