

Secretary General's Remarks at the Workshop on
Seeds without borders: "Regional Cooperation for Seed Sharing"
organized by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)
Thimphu, Bhutan, 22-23 November 2022

- Hon'ble Secretaries
- Dr. Jean Balié, Director General and Team from IRRI
- Distinguished Delegates
- Donors
- Ladies & Gentlemen

Good Morning!

First of all, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) for giving BIMSTEC the opportunity to participate in this important Workshop. Let me also congratulate the Royal Government of Bhutan and in particular the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests for holding this Workshop.

I am aware that IRRI has been working very hard over the last couple of years in trying to promote "Seeds Without Borders", which I feel is a very important component to take agriculture forward and since most of the people in our region are still heavily dependent on agriculture for their livelihood.

I am also very happy to inform the Workshop today that except for Thailand all other 6 Member States of BIMSTEC – Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka are not just actively engaged and Signatories to Seeds Without Borders Agreement but they are also in fact the pioneers in promoting this Initiative including the signing of Dhaka Agreement, the Kathmandu Agreement and Siem Reap Agreement.

Distinguished Delegates,

Agriculture is the backbone of BIMSTEC Member States Economy and therefore it is one of the core areas of BIMSTEC Cooperation. Very recently, we had our 2nd BIMSTEC Senior Officials Meeting on Agriculture and 2nd BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture.

One of the important outcomes had been the adoption of the BIMSTEC Plan of Action on: Strengthening BIMSTEC Agriculture Cooperation for a duration of 5 years from 2023 to 2027 and Development of Seed Sector has been listed as one of the core actions in the Plan of Action.

To further take forward agriculture and food security cooperation, BIMSTEC is also exploring partnerships and collaboration with development partners. Very recently, the BIMSTEC Agriculture Ministers approved and adopted to sign MoU between IFPRI and BIMSTEC on agriculture cooperation.

I am happy, BIMSTEC has now begun its interaction with International Rice Research Institute IRRI through this workshop and we look forward to further strengthening our collaboration in agriculture development and seeds promotion in particular.

Before I close, let me join others to congratulate Philippines, Fiji and Vietnam for signing and joining the other Signatories of “Seeds Without Borders”.

Finally, let me congratulate IRRI and Ministry of Agriculture & Forests of the Royal Government of Bhutan for hosting and successfully signing the Seeds Agreement.
