

**Special Remarks by H.E. Mr. Tenzin Lekphell,**

**Secretary-General of BIMSTEC at the Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials on Agriculture** 09 November 2022, New Delhi, India [Virtual]

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**His Excellency Dr. Himanshu Pathak, Secretary, Department of Agriculture Research & Education of the Government of India**

**Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates; Ladies and Gentlemen;**

It is an honour for me to deliver the Special Remarks at this august gathering today. To begin with, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of India for taking the lead in organizing & hosting the Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials on Agriculture virtually today. I would also like to express my deep appreciation to all other Senior Officials and Delegates from other BIMSTEC Member States for their participation in this important meeting.

The First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials of Agriculture was held in 2019 and it is very encouraging to see our Senior Officials meeting again this year. With this same commitment and momentum, I am confident that BIMSTEC Agriculture Cooperation will advance much faster and fetch tangible results in the near future that will benefit the peoples of this region.

**Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,**

Given the important role of agriculture in the livelihood of the people of all seven BIMSTEC Member States, agriculture was included in 2005 as one of the core areas of BIMSTEC Cooperation.

Since then, Agriculture has been one of the most active sectors of BIMSTEC cooperation, and for this we would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the Member States, and especially Myanmar for their active role as a lead country of this sector.

**Excellencies,**

Today's meeting has a number of reports to be reviewed and several important issues to be discussed. While review of expert group meeting reports and other issues are important, I would however, like to highlight two pertinent issues for today's meeting to kindly consider.

- **First**, the Plan of Action on Strengthening BIMSTEC Agricultural Cooperation
- and **Second**, the Memorandum of Understanding between the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and BIMSTEC.

## **Plan of Action**

As instructed by the Leaders at the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit held in Colombo this year, the Secretariat, in consultation with Myanmar as the Lead Country has developed a *draft Plan of Action on Strengthening BIMSTEC Agricultural Cooperation*.

The Plan of Action charts out BIMSTEC agricultural cooperation for the next five years, from 2023 to 2027. It has also identified 17 actions in 5 areas of cooperation with the objective to ensure food security, food safety and better nutrition, reduce rural poverty and increase resilience to climate change.

A template also been developed to specify projects and activities to assist the implementation of this Plan of Action.

The Plan of Action had been discussed in detail by the member states and updated by the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Agriculture.

Therefore, we hope that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Senior Officials Meeting today will finalize and endorse the Plan of Action, so that, it can be submitted to the Second BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture (BAMM) for its adoption tomorrow.

## **MOU with IFPRI**

On the second issue, which is the signing of MOU between BIMSTEC and IFPRI, I would like to report that, the 17<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting directed the Secretariat to explore partnership with appropriate regional and international organizations to strengthen project-based cooperation under Agriculture and Food Security Sector.

Accordingly, IFPRI has offered to collaborate with BIMSTEC to promote Agriculture & Food Security in the BIMSTEC region. It took almost three years to finalize the draft Memorandum of Understanding between BIMSTEC and IFPRI. The comments and observations from the member states, however, have now been incorporated in the draft MoU and we are hopeful that the Senior Officials Meeting today will consider approving the MOU.

## **Excellencies,**

The implementation status of the Common Projects varies from project to project. While some Member States have used their own resources to host workshops and seminars, some Common Projects under the leadership of some member states have not been implemented so far.

The First BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting on Agriculture recommended the Lead Coordinating Countries to bolster their efforts to explore and arrange funding for implementation of these identified common projects.

Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity today, to reiterate and remind the Lead Coordinating Countries to explore the possibility of initiating activities in their respective common projects.

**To conclude,** I would like to once again commend the Government of India for hosting the second BIMSTEC Agriculture Senior Officials Meeting and Myanmar for its leadership in this important sector. As I said earlier, since agriculture is one of the key sectors for BIMSTEC Cooperation - and a very important source of livelihood for the majority of the people of our region, we urge the Senior Officials and all the delegates here today to meet as often as possible and retain this present momentum of BIMSTEC Agriculture Cooperation.

As a Secretariat, we assure our full support and commitment to all Member States to further advance cooperation in the BIMSTEC Agriculture Sector.

Thank you

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