

**Opening Ceremony of the Exhibition on the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of BIMSTEC  
Bangkok, Thailand, 13 June 2022**

**His Excellency Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Her Excellency Ms. Suchitra Durai, Ambassador of India to Thailand  
His Excellency Mr. Cherdchai, Director General, Department of International Economic  
Affairs,  
Excellencies & Representatives of BIMSTEC Member States  
Officials of the Government of Thailand  
Exhibitors, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am very happy to be here with all of you today at the inauguration of this BIMSTEC Exhibition - celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation.

I thank the Government of Thailand, especially the officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs led by His Excellency Mr. Don Pramudwinai for organising this wonderful exhibition and for inviting me to be present here as well.

The Secretariat on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June (which is few days back) organized a reception in Dhaka and launched a publication titled – 25 years of BIMSTEC and a special edition of our Newsletter with messages from all the leaders of the seven member states to honour BIMSTEC Day and its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

As a part of the silver jubilee celebrations, we are also planning a series of workshops and seminars and a BIMSTEC Quiz competition amongst students of the seven member countries in the next few months.

Likewise, I anticipate that other BIMSTEC member states will also be organizing similar BIMSTEC events during the course of this year to celebrate our silver jubilee anniversary and engage the peoples of our region at the same time.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Twenty-five years ago, on the 06<sup>th</sup> of June 1997, this city saw the birth of BIMSTEC.

The regional cooperation journey of BIMSTEC commenced from here with the signature of the Bangkok Declaration.

And since then, BIMSTEC has been moving forward and has made progress in several fields. The Institutional frame work is being carefully crafted at a measured pace to facilitate regional cooperation. Legally binding frameworks and instruments in the areas of cooperation have mostly been established laying a strong foundation of regional integration and cooperation.

Establishing the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka in 2014, and the adoption of the BIMSTEC Charter at the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit in Colombo this year (2022) are two very important milestones that BIMSTEC has achieved.

BIMSTEC, over the last 25 years, has proven to be a bridge of friendship, connecting the peoples of South and South East Asia - bound together by cultural heritage, mutual goodwill and a shared vision of development and prosperity.

**The 5<sup>th</sup> Summit**, this year, also approved the rationalization and reconstitution of fourteen areas of BIMSTEC cooperation to seven core sectors, so that, going forward, BIMSTEC cooperation could be better focused.

**Connectivity** is one of the seven core sectors of BIMSTEC and has always been a priority for the region.

The BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity that contains 267 projects including connectivity through roads, railways, ports, inland waterways, and airports - with soft components such as capacity building, access agreements and harmonization of rules, regulations, policies and measures related to transport between and among BIMSTEC member countries has been adopted by the 5<sup>th</sup> Summit in March this year.

Thailand, after the last Summit, is taking the lead role in this vital sector of connectivity for BIMSTEC.

We all know that Thailand has the experience and expertise in implementing Connectivity Master Plans. The ASEAN Connectivity Master Plan for example which was adopted in 2010 is currently under successful implementation in the ASEAN region.

We are therefore optimistic that under Thailand's leadership in this sector, with a Master Plan that is ready to be implemented; and cooperation extended by the member states, the projects and components of the Master Plan will soon be translated into physical implementation and thereby achieve our aspiration for a truly connected Bay of Bengal Region.

### **Excellencies,**

Thailand has also taken over as the Chair Member State of BIMSTEC from March this year.

As Chair of BIMSTEC, it has already introduced "Prosperous, Resilient and Open BIMSTEC" or "PRO – BIMSTEC" as the approach and theme to revitalize economies, reconnect the people to people ties and revive our communities after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Once again, under the experienced leadership of Thailand in regional cooperation and strong commitment and dedication extended by the other member states, we are confident that BIMSTEC will continue to grow and bring South and South East Asia closer.

I want to once again thank the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, Director General and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for organizing this wonderful exhibition to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of BIMSTEC.

I wish to reaffirm the Secretariat's commitment to work hand-in-hand with all member states at all times, and pledge our full support and cooperation to Thailand in leading BIMSTEC as the Chair.

Thank you.