



**Fourteenth Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral
Technical and Economic Cooperation
(BIMSTEC) Ministerial Meeting**



**Report of the Fourteenth Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral
Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Ministerial Meeting
3 March 2014
Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar**

1. The Foreign Ministers and the Permanent Secretary of BIMSTEC Member States met in Nay Pyi Taw on 3 March 2014 to finalize preparations for the Third BIMSTEC Summit being held in Nay Pyi Taw on 4 March 2014.
2. The Ministers considered and approved the Report of the 16th BIMSTEC Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) held in Nay Pyi Taw on 2 March 2014.
3. The Ministers expressed their readiness to sign the following instruments:
 - (i) Memorandum of Association on the Establishment of BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat.
 - (ii) Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission (BCIC) and BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory (BCIO).
 - (iii) Memorandum of Association among BIMSTEC member countries concerning Establishment of a BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate
4. They reviewed the progress in the priority areas in BIMSTEC and noted that the holding of regular meetings, exchanges between experts and participation in projects would intensify cooperation among Member States.

Trade and Investment

5. They noted the importance of regional integration through promotion of trade and investment for growth and development of the region and underscored the need to move towards formation of the BIMSTEC Free Trade Area (FTA) for promoting trade and investment in the Bay of Bengal region.

6. They conveyed their appreciation to the Government of Thailand for hosting the 6th Meeting of BIMSTEC Business Forum, the 6th Meeting of the BIMSTEC Economic Forum and the 19th Meeting of the BIMSTEC Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC), and urged all Member States to cooperate for early convening of the 20th TNC Meeting in Thailand.

7. They encouraged the Member States to sign the following agreements during the next BIMSTEC Trade and Economic Ministerial Meeting in Bangladesh in 2014:

- (i) Agreement on Trade in Goods of the Framework Agreement on BIMSTEC Free Trade Area;
- (ii) Protocol to Amend the Framework Agreement on BIMSTEC Free Trade Area;
- (iii) Agreement on Dispute Settlement Procedures and Mechanism of the Framework Agreement on BIMSTEC Free Trade Area; and
- (iv) Agreement on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Customs Matters for BIMSTEC Free Trade Area.

Technology

8. They conveyed their appreciation to the Government of Sri Lanka for hosting the 3rd Expert Group Meeting on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Exchange Facility and urged Member States to accelerate efforts for the early finalization of the Memorandum of Association on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Exchange Facility.

Energy

9. They underlined the need to promote the use of natural gas as a source of clean energy for Member States in order to reduce dependence on imported oil and also noted that import and export of natural gas among BIMSTEC Member States will help enhance our energy security.

10. They expressed satisfaction at the progress made in this priority area and expressed their appreciation to the lead country and to the Governments of Bangladesh and India for organizing the Task Force on Trans-Power Exchange Meetings for finalization of the draft MoU on BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection.

11. They welcomed the offer of the Government of Nepal to host the 3rd Meeting of the BIMSTEC Ministers of Energy in 2014 and the offer of the Government of Bhutan to host the 4th Ministerial Meeting in 2015.

12. They noted the progress made towards the establishment of the BIMSTEC Energy Centre in Bengaluru, India. They welcomed the offer of the Government of India to host the 2nd BIMSTEC Task Force Meeting in 2014 to discuss and finalize the modalities for the operationalization of the BIMSTEC Energy Centre.

Transport and Communication

13. They emphasized the need for improved regional connectivity and urged closer cooperation between Member States. They conveyed their appreciation to the BIMSTEC Working Group and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), which enabled the implementation of the BTILS report and its updating moving towards concrete projects for enhancement of intraregional transport infrastructure and logistics. They urged Member States to identify short list of priority projects and prepare an action plan for 2014-2020.

Tourism

14. They recognized the tremendous cultural wealth and tourism potentials in the BIMSTEC region and called for closer coordination between Government officials and private sectors in tourism. They conveyed their appreciation to the Government of India for holding the 1st Meeting of the Tourism Working Group in New Delhi.

15. They welcomed the offer of the Government of Bangladesh to host the 2nd Meeting of the Tourism Working Group in preparation for the 3rd BIMSTEC Tourism Ministers Round Table and Workshop as early as possible.

Fisheries

16. They agreed to continue cooperation for the sustainable use of marine resources through effective conservation and management of resources in the Bay of Bengal as well as inland fisheries and decided to further enhance cooperation in this area.

17. They conveyed appreciation to the Government of Thailand for conducting the BIMSTEC International Training Programmes on Aquatic Plants Tissue Culture in 2011, 2012 and 2013 for strengthening cooperation among the BIMSTEC Member countries in promoting the development of aquatic plants technology in the BIMSTEC region and enhancing networking among experts and relevant agencies.

Agriculture

18. They recognized the central role of agriculture in BIMSTEC economy and livelihoods, noted that projects of cooperation had been identified and expressed the hope that the 4th BIMSTEC Expert Working Group Meeting on Agriculture Cooperation to be held in Kathmandu would act as a catalyst for further cooperation.

Cultural Cooperation

19. They noted the progress made in the area of cultural cooperation and expressed satisfaction that the Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission (BCIC) and BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory (BCIO) in Bhutan will be signed at the Third BIMSTEC Summit. They welcomed the offer of the Government of Bhutan to host the 2nd Expert Group Meeting in 2014 to discuss and finalize the modalities for the operationalization of the BCIC and BCIO.

Environment and Disaster Management

20. They emphasized the need for close cooperation to deal with adverse environmental effects and capacity building for disaster management. In this context, they noted the progress made in the area of environment and disaster management and expressed satisfaction at the signing of the Memorandum of Association among BIMSTEC Member Countries concerning the Establishment of a BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate in India. They welcomed the offer of the Government of India to host a meeting in 2014 to discuss and finalize the modalities for the operationalization of the BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate.

Public Health

21. They urged Member States to enhance cooperation in the area of traditional medicine and welcomed the establishment of the BIMSTEC Network of National Centres of Coordination in traditional medicine and continued offer of AYUSH scholarships in traditional medicine by India to promote capacity building.

People-to-People Contact

22. They expressed satisfaction at the setting up of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks and welcomed the offer of Thailand to host the second meeting of BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks in 2014. They also took

note of the successful convening of the BIMSTEC International Conference on BIMSTEC Connectivity and People-to-People Contact in Chiang Mai Province, the seminar of Curtain Raiser on BIMSTEC in Yangon and encouraged member countries to conduct other activities to promote People-to-People Contact for creating public awareness on BIMSTEC, including programmes on BIMSTEC Day.

23. They reiterated the importance of facilitating travel among BIMSTEC member countries to promote people-to-people contact. They took note of the progress made by the Expert Group with regard to the BIMSTEC Business Visa Scheme and the BIMSTEC Visa Exemption Scheme and called upon the Expert Group to convene its next meeting at the earliest with a view to completing discussions on the issue.

Poverty Alleviation

24. They expressed satisfaction at the adoption of the Plan of Action on Poverty Alleviation (PPA) at the 2nd BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting in Kathmandu on 16 January 2012.

25. They welcomed the offer of the Government of Sri Lanka to host the 3rd BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation in 2014.

26. Recognizing the significance of a Poverty Alleviation Centre, they recalled the 2nd Summit Declaration to establish the Centre in Dhaka and expressed the hope that the Centre will soon be established so that it could contribute towards alleviation of poverty in the region through quality research and studies.

Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime

27. They underscored the importance of combating international terrorism and transnational crimes, and urged the Member States to work for early ratification of the BIMSTEC Convention on Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking.

28. They expressed satisfaction at the finalization of the draft Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters and urged Member States to undertake necessary steps for early signing of the document.

29. They took note of the progress on the discussion of Thailand's proposal to create a list of individual terrorists and terrorist groups in BIMSTEC Member States pursuant to the discussions at the BIMSTEC Sub-Group Meeting on

Combating the Financing of Terrorism. They welcomed the initiative of the Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime to engage in deliberations on Combating Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration. They also called upon Member States to engage in negotiations on the proposed BIMSTEC Convention on Extradition.

30. They were encouraged by the level of cooperation in the area of counter terrorism and the expansion of cooperative activities to other transnational crimes. They welcomed the offer of the Myanmar delegation to host the next Meeting of the Sub-group on Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances, and Precursor Chemicals at an early date.

Climate Change

31. They welcomed the offer of the Government of Bangladesh to circulate the Concept Paper on cooperation in the area of climate change by early April 2014, and hold a workshop in October 2014 to draw up an action plan for cooperation in this area.

Establishment of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat

32. They conveyed their appreciation to the Government of Bangladesh for the generous offer of providing the premises and facilities for the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka.

33. They approved the Report of the 16th SOM (Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar; 2 March 2014) and endorsed the recommendation of the Special SOM (Dhaka, Bangladesh; 24 November 2011) on the provisional scale of contribution to the budget of BIMSTEC Secretariat, as well as the report of the 6th JWG (Tangail, Bangladesh; 18-19 November 2012) on the provisions relating to financial and administrative matters of the BIMSTEC Secretariat.

34. They also conveyed their appreciation to the Government of Thailand for hosting the BWG Meetings.

Appointment of the BIMSTEC Secretary General

35. They appointed Mr. Sumith Nakandala of Sri Lanka as the first Secretary-General of BIMSTEC. They expressed confidence that he would play a pivotal role in the work of BIMSTEC Secretariat.

36. They expressed satisfaction that the appointment of the first Secretary-General will be officially announced at the 3rd BIMSTEC Summit.

BIMSTEC Centres

37. They appreciated measures to establish BIMSTEC Centres, as agreed, and urged to finalize matters pertaining to the organization and financing mechanism to operationalize the BIMSTEC Centres.

Handing over of the BIMSTEC Chairmanship

38. They conveyed appreciation to the Government of Myanmar for assuming the responsibility of Chairmanship from December 2009 to March 2014 and successfully hosting the 3rd BIMSTEC Summit in Nay Pyi Taw. They also appreciated the kind acceptance of the Government of Nepal to assume the next Chairmanship of BIMSTEC.

BIMSTEC Website

39. They conveyed appreciation to ADB for its support in the restoration of BIMSTEC Website (www.bimstec.org).

Third BIMSTEC Summit Chairman Website

40. They expressed appreciation to the Government of Myanmar, current Chair of the BIMSTEC, for its BIMSTEC Chairman Website (www.thirdbimstecsummit.gov.mm) contributing to the work of the 3rd BIMSTEC Summit and raising public awareness on BIMSTEC.

41. The Ministers adopted this Report, and recommended the Summit Declaration for adoption at the Third BIMSTEC Summit.

3 March 2014
Nay Pyi Taw.
