

**Special Remarks by**  
**His Excellency Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey,**  
**Secretary General of BIMSTEC**  
**at the Sixth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks**  
**(BNPTT)**  
**(Virtually) hosted by Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International**  
**Studies on 09-10 July 2024 (Tuesday- Wednesday), Yangon, Myanmar**

---

---

- **Excellency Mr. U Thant Kyaw, Chairman, Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies;**
- **Distinguished Members of BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks;**
- **Dear Friends, Good morning to you all.**

I am delighted to attend the 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks. It is first time that I am addressing a Meeting of BNPTT, since assuming the role of Secretary General of BIMSTEC early January this year.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the Government of Myanmar and the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies for organizing the 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks, which manifests their commitment to BIMSTEC. I warmly welcome all the distinguished participants.

**Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,**

The BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (BNPTT) has been established by the member States, as a Track-II initiative, to promote people-to-people contacts, with a view to foster regional cooperation and integration, among the member States.

As an interactive forum of scholars and academicians, the Network serves as an invaluable platform for deliberations on various issues under the ambit of regional cooperation within the BIMSTEC.

Through their research, analysis and studies, the members of BNPTT have provided evidence-based policy choices and innovative ideas for expanding and deepening regional cooperation and charting out the future of the BIMSTEC.

Furthermore, the Network has played a vital role in promoting public outreach by organizing public discourses for disseminating information on BIMSTEC, its goals and achievements. The Network has also contributed to the deliberations amongst the member States by preparing thematic policy papers and inputs.

## **Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,**

The strategic significance of BIMSTEC is evident from the fact that the total population of BIMSTEC member States in 2022 was 1.8 billion, about 22% of the global population. Their GDP in 2022 was US\$ 4.5 trillion and their combined external trade in 2022 amounted to US\$ 1.95 trillion.

As you are aware, regional cooperation within the BIMSTEC framework is vast and extensive which is organized in 7 broad sectors and 8 sub-sectors under them.

BIMSTEC has well-established institutional mechanisms. BIMSTEC core mechanisms comprise of BIMSTEC Summits; BIMSTEC Ministerial Meetings; BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meetings; and BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee.

BIMSTEC has Sectoral Ministerial Mechanisms in Agriculture; Culture; Energy; Poverty Alleviation; Tourism; and Trade & Investment Sectors. There are also Sectoral Senior Officials' Meeting and Working Group/Expert Groups/Technical Groups in various Sectors and sub-Sectors.

As part of its commitment to build institutions, BIMSTEC has also established BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate (BCWC) and BIMSTEC Energy Centre (BEC). A Technology Transfer Facility is being set up in Colombo.

As regards external relations, aimed at leveraging the resources and capacities of our developmental partners to strengthen regional cooperation within the BIMSTEC framework, we have already signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) with ADB and IFPRI. And MoUs are under consideration with IORA, World Bank, UNODC, UNESCAP and UNOPS.

With the entry into force of the Charter, BIMSTEC is open to new member States and Observers. The BIMSTEC Charter provides for admission of new members and observers. Interested countries or organizations have to express their interest to the Secretary General of BIMSTEC through a Letter of Interest or an application.

BIMSTEC enjoys the requisite political support of its members, focuses on technical and economic cooperation and stays away from political issues. Considering that the BIMSTEC member States account for 22% of the global population, the BIMSTEC region assumes a high importance for realizing the goals of security and development in Indian Ocean Region and BIMSTEC is poised to lead regional cooperation in the Bay of Bengal region.

## **Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,**

Agriculture is considered the backbone of the economies of BIMSTEC member States, significantly contributing to their GDP, creation of employment and livelihoods as well as external trade. It also plays a prominent role in achieving food security, an important dimension of national security. Development of Agriculture is also considered critical for realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aimed at reducing hunger and poverty.

Acknowledging the importance of agriculture and its prominence in regional collaboration and development, ‘Agriculture and Food Security’ has been included as one of the areas of regional cooperation within BIMSTEC with Myanmar as the lead country.

A ‘Plan of Action on Strengthening BIMSTEC Agricultural Cooperation’ developed by the Expert Group has been under implementation since 2022. The Plan includes 17 points of action under 5 area of cooperation. They are:

Increasing Agricultural Productivity; Promoting Sustainable Agricultural Practices; Enhancing Agricultural Trade and Investment; Promoting Agricultural Research and Development; Improving Food Security and Nutrition.

I am glad that the 6th Meeting of BNPTT is going to focus on the theme of development of Agriculture Sector and food security. I am confident that the discussions and deliberations during the Meeting will yield valuable insights and pragmatic recommendations crucial for shaping the future direction of agricultural cooperation within BIMSTEC framework and achieving food security in the Bay of Bengal region.

May I also request you to conduct a review of various recommendations you made at your previous 5 meetings and present a set of recommendations, taking into account the progress the BIMSTEC has made since your first meeting in 2010 and its future direction. Your recommendations as independent think tanks will provide guidance to the member States during their deliberations at the 6<sup>th</sup> Summit.

## **Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates,**

Before I conclude, I would like to express again my heartfelt gratitude to Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies for hosting today’s meeting. I am also grateful to all BNPTT members for their participation.

My best wishes for the success of your Meeting. Thank you for your kind attention.  
Have a joyful day. I am looking forward to seeing you in person in future.  
Namastaar!

\*\*\*\*\*