

Dr. Shahidur Rashid, Director for South Asia, IFPRI
Excellencies,
Distinguished Panelists,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Namaskar, A very good morning to you all!

I am delighted to participate in the dissemination Event titled “Shaping a Climate Resilient and Sustainable Food System in the BIMSTEC Region” which has been organised in partnership with BIMSTEC. I thank IFPRI for its invitation to speak during the inaugural Session. I regret that I am unable to join in person due to my prior commitments and I am happy to share my thoughts with you through this brief video message.

Let me begin by commending IFPRI for organizing today’s Event and for its commitment to improving food security and promoting sustainable agricultural practices globally, including in the Bay of Bengal region.

Shaping a climate resilient and sustainable food system is of critical importance for Bay of Bengal region. The 7 BIMSTEC member States, home to over 1.8 billion people, are vulnerable to devastating impact of climate change on Agriculture and related Sectors. The need for climate-resilient and sustainable Agriculture has never been more urgent for the region. The BIMSTEC member States are fully committed to fostering regional cooperation in agriculture and food security Sector, which is led by Myanmar, and environment and climate change Sector which is led by Bhutan.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Given that agriculture plays a pivotal role in the economies of BIMSTEC member States, providing livelihoods for a substantial part of their populations, cooperation in Agriculture has been a priority Sectors of cooperation since 2005, and we have made good progress in creating institutional framework for forging regional cooperation. In November 2022, BIMSTEC Agriculture Ministers had adopted a Plan of Action on Strengthening BIMSTEC Agricultural Cooperation, which charts out the areas for regional cooperation. The Plan of Action has identified 17 actions in 5 areas of cooperation with the broader objectives of ensuring food security, food safety and better nutrition; reducing rural poverty; as well as increasing resilience to climate change. One of the areas included in the Plan of Action is “Enhancing Agricultural Trade and Investment”.

I am glad that the Event is going to focus, during the next three sessions, on agri-food transition: global value chains; evolving dynamics of agri-food trade; and transforming trade insights. Through enhancing Intra-regional trade in agricultural and other food items we can not only ensure food security for our people but also provide a boost to production and export of agri and other food commodities by the BIMSTEC member States.

As regards regional cooperation in dealing with the challenges of climate change, BIMSTEC leaders have identified Environment and Climate Change as a key Sector of cooperation. The Joint Working Group, which has already met twice, has finalized a Plan of Action comprising three Priority areas: (i) Biodiversity, (ii) Waste Management and (iii) Climate Change.

BIMSTEC is ready to work closely with all the relevant stakeholders to promote agricultural trade and investment, increase agricultural productivity and promote sustainable agricultural practices. We welcome the support of our external developmental partners, like IFPRI, in all these areas.

BIMSTEC is privileged to have established a fruitful partnership with IFPRI. The MOU between BIMSTEC and IFPRI aims to foster collaboration on a range of activities, focusing on policy analysis and advice, research and capacity building; and dissemination of knowledge and best practices in several key areas, including agriculture trade, food safety and quality, and climate change. We appreciate the continued commitment of IFPRI to implement the MoU in close coordination with the BIMSTEC Secretariat and we remain in this regard committed to continue to work with IFPRI in future.

Let me conclude by thanking IFPRI again for organizing this dissemination Event in partnership with BIMSTEC and inviting me to address the inaugural Session. I wish the Event great success in realizing its objectives. I Wish you all meaningful deliberations and thank you for your kind attention. Have a great day.