

**Statement by
H.E. Dr. Harini Amarasuriya
Prime Minister of Sri Lanka**

**6th BIMSTEC Summit
Bangkok, Thailand, 04 April 2025**

Her Excellency Paetongtarn Shinawatra, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand,
and Chair of the 6th BIMSTEC Summit,

Heads of Government and Heads of Delegation of the BIMSTEC member States,

Secretary General of BIMSTEC,

Distinguished Delegates,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I begin by congratulating the Prime Minister of Thailand for assuming the Chairmanship of the 6th BIMSTEC Summit, and for her inspiring opening address.

Madam Chair,

Your beautiful country is one with which Sri Lanka has deep and enduring cultural and religious bonds, and it is an honour for me to represent Sri Lanka at this BIMSTEC Summit that is chaired by you today.

I bring with me, Madam Chair, the greetings and good wishes of the President of Sri Lanka, H.E. Anura Kumara Disanayake and the people of Sri Lanka; and I wish to thank you, and the Government of Thailand for the warm and gracious hospitality extended to me and my delegation. I also wish to express our appreciation for the efficient and effective leadership provided by Thailand as Chair of BIMSTEC since the 5th Summit in 2022.

At this moment, I also wish state that Sri Lanka stands in solidarity with those affected by the earthquake that struck Myanmar and Thailand few days ago. Our sincere condolences to those that have lost loved ones and we also wish those who have suffered injuries a speedy recovery. We recognize in times of tragedy the strength of regional partnerships becomes even more vital. Damaged historical monuments that I saw just now are heartbreaking. These are part of our collective heritage of our region.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentleman,

Twenty-eight years ago, in 1997, this city gave birth to BIMSTEC when the Bangkok Declaration was signed. Twenty-one years ago in 2004, this city hosted the first BIMSTEC Summit. BIMSTEC has journeyed far since then. Its membership has expanded; it has a full-fledged Secretariat headed by a Secretary General; and it has a Charter, giving it legal personality and scope to reach whatever heights of regional cooperation that we as member Governments want BIMSTEC to achieve. It is now entirely up to us to decide how effective we want BIMSTEC to be, and how we wish to collectively shape it and empower it to achieve goals and outcomes that would benefit the people of the BIMSTEC countries.

This Summit in Bangkok is an important one. We adopt today, the BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030 which envisions a “Prosperous, Resilient and Open BIMSTEC”, where poverty is substantially reduced and progress towards sustainable development and growth are achieved; where crisis-preparedness, responsiveness and human security in various dimensions and post-pandemic economic recovery are strengthened; and an inclusive multi-pronged and multi-stakeholder approach is adopted to achieve our goals.

Excellencies,

This Summit takes place at a time when the world is witnessing change and disruption. The global political environment fosters insecurity. There is increasing economic uncertainty. And multilateralism is under threat.

Our Government was elected with a strong mandate for change. For a more inclusive and equitable and democratic society transparent and responsive political culture.

In this context, the logical and pragmatic approach for us as neighbours and friends in BIMSTEC is to resolve to pursue our quest for closer and mutually beneficial ties with renewed vigour. We must exert efforts to forge stronger and more meaningful ties; and explore imaginative, creative, and innovative ways of enhancing cooperation in the best interest of the people of our region. Although we face many challenges, we similarly have many unexplored opportunities as well in numerous fields including trade, economic cooperation and connectivity which, if seized, will benefit all our countries.

We must approach issues with open and accommodative mindsets to seek solutions to what has held us back from moving forward; we must find ways to share knowledge, technology, intelligence, and best practices; improve physical, digital, and energy connectivity; and accelerate the pace and depth of cooperation in the sectors and sub-sectors of BIMSTEC cooperation.

I note with satisfaction, emphasis on Blue Economy and maritime cooperation in the BIMSTEC in the Bangkok Vision 2030.

I believe that we must resolve to work on strengthening BIMSTEC as an organization that our countries cannot do without. We must also explore ways in which BIMSTEC can forge new and closer cooperation with international organisations, and means of resource mobilization to meet our goals.

Excellencies,

As the only island nation in BIMSTEC, we welcome the signing of the Maritime Transport Cooperation Agreement today. Sri Lanka seeks to develop its ports and related infrastructure required to make our country a hub in the Indian Ocean that can serve all the BIMSTEC member states and the wider Indian Ocean region.

Excellencies,

As the lead country in BIMSTEC for the Science, Technology, and Innovation Sector, and the sub-sectors of Public Health and Human Resource Development, Sri Lanka remains firmly committed to strengthening cooperation in these areas.

During the 5th Summit in 2022, member States signed the MoU for the establishment of the BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility (TTF) in Colombo. I understand that all member States have completed their respective domestic formalities, so now we can take steps to convene the Governing Board of the Centre at an early date.

Excellencies,

Since the 5th Summit in 2022, Sri Lanka has taken the initiative to formulate BIMSTEC Plans of Action in Science, Technology, and Innovation; Public Health; and Human Resource Development, and has worked with all member States to have them finalized and adopted. We now look to the cooperation of all the member States to implement these Plans.

The BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Human Resource Development was finalized by the Expert Group recently. The plan aims to equip the people of the BIMSTEC countries with the skills necessary to address future challenges, ensuring that BIMSTEC remains resilient and competitive in the global landscape. As you would agree, prioritizing human resource development is essential for the long-term progress and prosperity of our Member States, and I urge that we accelerate our efforts in working towards achieving meaningful outcomes in this area.

Excellencies,

We welcome the Report of the Eminent Persons Group and look forward to working on the Group's recommendations to make BIMSTEC realise its Vision 2030 and meet the aspirations of our people.

Madam Chair,
Excellencies,

As Bangladesh will be assuming the Chair of BIMSTEC next, I take this opportunity to convey Sri Lanka's best wishes, and assure Bangladesh of our fullest cooperation. I would also like to express our appreciation to Bangladesh for hosting the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka.

I also acknowledge the important work being carried out by our Secretary General, H.E. Indra Mani Pandey and the staff of the Secretariat, who I had the pleasure of meeting in Sri Lanka recently.

I conclude my remarks by reaffirming Sri Lanka's firm commitment to regional cooperation for mutual benefit, and by pledging Sri Lanka's continued support to translate BIMSTEC ideals into meaningful cooperation on the ground. Our primary responsibility is to cooperate and work together to achieve a better life for all our people, and this is a noble quest which must inspire and unite us every single day.

I Thank you.