

Statement
at the 3rd BIMSTEC Summit
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Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar
4 March 2014

Your Excellency Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies, Heads of State and Heads of Government,
Distinguished Delegates,

At the outset, permit me to extend, on behalf of the Thai delegation, our heartfelt appreciation to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the Government of Myanmar for the very generous and warm hospitality accorded to us since our arrival in Nay Pyi Taw, and for the superb arrangements for this important Meeting of ours.

As Chair of BIMSTEC, and Chair of ASEAN, Myanmar has shown strong leadership and, therefore, we are assured of the success of our Meeting in opening a new chapter for BIMSTEC.

Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra has asked me to convey her sincere apologies for not being able to be here. She also sends her good wishes to you, Mr. Chairman, and to Your Excellencies, and is confident that, under your wise guidance, Mr. Chairman, this Meeting will be a great success.

Mr. Chairman,

Our Meeting is timely because Asia, due to its economic vibrancy, has captivated the attention of the international community.

Increased economic integration, through such frameworks as ASEAN, the GMS, SAARC, and BIMSTEC, has made the Indo-Pacific region an important growth pole for the world economy.

And increased regionalism has also helped Asia to maintain peace.

So increasingly, Asia matters to global prosperity and stability. And all of this, the founding fathers of BIMSTEC had the foresight to recognize.

BIMSTEC was founded in 1997 to bridge South and Southeast Asia, with a view to nurturing the great economic potential that we possess. We have made **steady progress** in many areas of cooperation.

Still, we can and must do more in all 14 areas of cooperation and beyond in order to reinvigorate our partnership and capture the benefits of a strong and vibrant Asia for our peoples.

Just as the United Nations is putting together a post-2015 Development Agenda and ASEAN is articulating its post-2015 vision, so too should BIMSTEC look ahead and craft a vision for our future.

Mr. Chairman,

In looking ahead, we should **first** make it a priority to conclude a **BIMSTEC FTA**.

There is significant room for growth in the trade between South and Southeast Asia. The BIMSTEC region accounts for 21 per cent of the world's population. And yet the region accounts for just 3 per cent of global GDP. So obviously, we have yet to realize our full potential.

An FTA can not only help us to increase trade among ourselves and, eventually, with the outside world, but also to create jobs and spur growth, making the pie bigger for all. So we should expedite the negotiations, taking care, nevertheless, to go at a pace comfortable for all.

Second, we should enhance regional **connectivity** in all its forms, hardware, software, and people-to-people.

BIMSTEC is well-placed to do this because of its strategic location, linking the economies of East, Southeast, and South Asia with those of the Middle East and beyond.

In terms of physical connectivity, Thailand is working on extending the East-West Economic Corridor in the Mekong sub-region to the BIMSTEC region through the **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway Project**.

We are also working with the Government of Myanmar on the **Dawei Deep Sea Port and Industrial Development Zone Project**. Once completed, it will be a new and strategic regional gateway linking Southeast Asia with Chennai Port and beyond – indeed, a new chapter in logistics for the entire Indo-Pacific region.

At the same time, we need to help each other manage the **downsides of connectivity**, such as terrorism, transnational crime, drug and human trafficking, all of which pose serious challenges to our common security.

Third, we must give priority to **human security** – to ensuring equitable, inclusive, and sustainable people-centred growth and development.

Food, energy, and water security are challenges to our peoples' livelihoods and demand our immediate attention. In our approach to economic growth, we must try to strike the right balance between resource utilization and environmental conservation. BIMSTEC should look into **green growth**, perhaps creating incentives for more efficient use of natural resources and energy as well as waste management. This is an opportunity for innovation and value creation.

And because **climate change** is a reality that we all confront, and because our region is particularly prone to disasters, which can unravel years of economic growth, we must enhance our disaster management and response capacity.

The setting up of the BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate is, therefore, welcomed. We encourage the Centre to coordinate with the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (APDC) in Thailand to enhance the region's early-warning capacity.

Mr. Chairman,

Governments must take the lead in BIMSTEC. But the private sector also has a pivotal role to play in the advancement of our partnership, especially in opening up more economic opportunities. We should seek to intensify our engagement with the private sector and, in this regard, we see the BIMSTEC Business Forum as the main vehicle for doing so.

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

Ultimately, the vision we craft for the future of BIMSTEC must be backed by political will and commitment as well as strengthened institutions and mechanisms.

So Thailand would like to propose that BIMSTEC Ministerial Meetings be convened every year and Summits every two years – as an expression of our political will and commitment to reinvigorating BIMSTEC.

The signing this morning of three historic instruments, especially that establishing the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat, is also a significant development for our cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

Thailand wishes to join with other Member States in commending Myanmar for her leadership and tireless efforts as BIMSTEC Chair since 2009.

Thailand reaffirms our support of Myanmar's continuing political reform and national reconciliation process and the remarkable transformation taking place.

May I also take this opportunity to congratulate Nepal as next BIMSTEC Chair. We look forward to cooperating with Nepal to further enhance our partnership under BIMSTEC.

Mr. Chairman, lastly, I wish to touch briefly upon the political situation in Thailand, which I know you follow very closely.

Democracy comes with its challenges; and these are challenging times for Thailand. We appreciate your expressions of concern and support. And taking this opportunity, my Government wishes to assure you that the Thai people are determined to resolve the current situation peacefully and through the democratic process. We are determined to stay the course of democracy, further strengthening our democratic institutions and values.

We are also determined that Thailand continue its proactive role in working with our partners to advance our cooperation under BIMSTEC and in the promotion of regional peace, stability, and prosperity.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, the future for BIMSTEC looks bright because we have the potential to seize the opportunities that come with a strong and vibrant Asia. So let us craft a vision and move forward together.

Thank you.