

**78th Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
23-27 May 2022
Bangkok**

Your Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honoured to be able to participate in the 78th Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, on the theme "A common agenda to advance sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific".

As ESCAP honors 75 years of its establishment, I would like to offer my felicitations and warm congratulations to H.E. Armida Salsiah, the Executive Secretary of UN-ESCAP and her colleagues for your achievements and the work that you do.

As we draw closer to the 2030 Agenda, it is encouraging, to note the progress made by the individual countries with the support of various organizations in the implementation of programs towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

However, as we are all aware, there is a lot more to be done and can be done in the achievement of the SDGs through collaboration and cooperation at the regional level.

In this context, I am happy to share with you, some of the significant steps taken under the umbrella of BIMSTEC and the priorities for us as we advance ahead.

BIMSTEC now works in 7 sectors of cooperation after the rationalization and reconstitution exercise that was approved by the recently concluded 5th Summit held in Colombo, on 30th March 2022.

The areas are Trade, Investment and Development, Environment and Climate Change, Security, Agriculture and Food Security, People to People Contact, Science, Technology & Innovation, and Connectivity. All of these aim to contribute towards the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

BIMSTEC aspires for seamless connectivity in the region, and therefore, the adoption of the Masterplan on Transport Connectivity by the 5th Summit is a milestone in this regard.

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We now hope that the Member States will work on implementing the components of the Master Plan, which will ensure the achievement of our aspiration for a truly connected Bay of Bengal Region.

The COVID-19 pandemic, has highlighted the need to develop uninterrupted supply chain for food, medicines and other basic essential commodities.

With the disruption in global supply chains, the need and opportunity to create intra-regional trade has emerged. Therefore, trade facilitation measures like simplification of customs procedures, introduction of electronic tracking system and acceptance of electronic copies need to be worked on.

The ongoing pandemic has also underscored the need for renewed attention to public health. Member states could collaborate in research, capacity building and use of technology in health, in order to collectively combat future pandemics that may occur.

Collaboration and cooperation in climate change and disaster management is another key area for BIMSTEC since all member states are vulnerable to natural disasters whether it is in the Himalayan region or the coastal areas. Therefore, it is important to develop regional adaptation and mitigation programs to address our region's vulnerability to natural disasters.

As BIMSTEC enters its 25th year since its establishment, we hope to take the opportunities provided by the potentials that exist in our region to move collectively towards achieving our goals and objectives with which the organization was founded.

Thank you!