

BIMST-EC Summit Declaration  
Bangkok, 31 July 2004

We, the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, the Prime Minister of the Republic of India, The Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Nepal, the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and the Prime Minister of The Kingdom of Thailand gathered in Bangkok, Thailand, on 31 July 2004 for the first BIMST-EC Summit Meeting;

Convinced that the geographical location of our countries and our rich natural and human resources provide a sound basis for mutually beneficial cooperation,

Recognizing that the pluralistic nature of our societies, our shared cultural heritage and the rich diversity of languages, arts, crafts and traditions provide ample opportunity for multi-dimensional cooperation within our region;

Convinced that regional and sub-regional economic cooperation such as ours contribute to efforts towards global free and fair trade being pursued under the multilateral trading regime,

Affirming that the above realities provide a firm foundation on which to build our partnership and overall cooperation;

Resolving to foster a sense of community that will lead to the economic and social development of the entire region;

Do hereby :

Agree that our grouping shall henceforth be known as BIMST-EC of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation.

Commit ourselves to the founding objectives and principles of BIMST-EC; to assess the challenges and opportunities for economic cooperation in our region; and to strengthen BIMST-EC's ability to find ways and means to realize those challenges and opportunities effectively and efficiently.

Note with satisfaction BIMST-EC's achievements so far, including the signing of the Framework Agreement for a BIMST-EC Free Trade Area, the launch of Visit BIMST-EC Year 2004-2005 and the year-long Plan of Action on tourism, the establishment of the BIMST-EC Chamber of Commerce, the first BIMST-EC Youth Football Tournament held in Phuket, the establishment of the BIMST-EC Center in Bangkok, and a biomass gasifier plant Myanmar, and pledge to move forward with renewed vigor.

Agree to focus on specific areas of cooperation, including but not limited to trade & investment, transport & communications, tourism, energy, human resources development, agriculture, fisheries, science & technology and people-to-people contact.

Agree to explore the expansion of BIMST-EC Cooperation into the areas of culture, education, and public health, protection of biodiversity and traditional knowledge, rural community development, small and medium-scale enterprise, construction, environment, information and communications technology, biotechnology, weather & climate research, natural disaster mitigation & management.

Agree to take all possible steps including timely completion of the Free Trade Area negotiations for realization of the full potential of BIMST-EC trade and investment, taking into account the special needs of individual member countries.

Recognize that future cooperation under BIMST-EC requires the development of key infrastructure, in particular transportation & communication linkages, to facilitate tourism, trade and investment and accordingly agree to strengthen and accelerate cooperation for developing concrete regional project proposals such as the ongoing negotiations on road linkages between the member countries.

Agree to promote sustainable and optimal energy utilization through development of new hydrocarbon and hydropower projects, interconnection of electricity and natural gas grids, energy technologies.

Agree to coordinate our diverse strengths in the tourism sector to derive maximum benefit from our natural, cultural and historical attractions, and recognize the need to enhance inter-regional tourism through such strategies as joint marketing of intra-BIMSTEC tourism packages, exchange of visits and information as well as sub regional tourism co-operation.

Agree to facilitate travel within the region for business travel, exchange programmes and tourism, including through the introduction of a BIMSTEC Business Travel Card/Visa.

Encourage the private sector to explore ways to tap the economic partnership potential of the member economies and make full use of BIMSTEC opportunities.

Agree to intensify cooperation to promote the sustainable use of the marine resources in the Bay of Bengal through effective management and conservation in close coordination with the already existing frameworks, including the Bay of Bengal Programme-Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO).

Agree to enhance technical cooperation aimed at capacity building, and recognize the potential for public and private organizations to expand existing cooperation in this area.

Express grave concern at the continuing threat of international terrorism and transnational crime that has adversely affected the economic and social progress of the peoples of the BIMSTEC region; recognize that the solidarity and friendship existing among member states could be utilized as a basis to counter this threat; agree, as an urgent priority, to co-ordinate our efforts to combat this menace; including through the exchange of information among concerned agencies, and other concrete programmes of co-operation, and resolve to continue active co-operation in ongoing efforts of the international community in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, by whosoever it is perpetrated irrespective of its cause or stated rationale.

Agree to coordinate our efforts to address, as a matter of priority, transactional issues that threaten the economic and social progress of peoples of the BIMSTEC region, including HIV/Aids and other threats to public health such as malaria, tuberculosis, and polio; and encourage active cooperation among concerned agencies, including through the exchange of information, sharing of experiences and other concrete programmes.

Decide to proactively promote increased interaction among our peoples through programmes, such as exchanges of parliamentarians, media persons, students and faculty, sports persons, as well as exchanges in the fields of performing arts and entertainment, such as motion pictures, television programmes and music.

Decide to accord priority to projects that could be clearly conceptualized, adequately funded and effectively implemented, with well-defined goals and tangible results relevant to the needs of our peoples, based, as far as possible, on internal financing from within the BIMSTEC countries.

Agree to streamline procedures and protocols to make BIMSTEC more efficient and output-based.

Agree that once a clear and focused programme of cooperation is in place, appropriate formal institutional mechanisms would be established, jointly and within each member country, for effective coordination and implementation.

Agree to task their Foreign Ministers with the responsibility of coordinating overall BIMSTEC cooperation.

We express our gratitude to the Government of Thailand for the warm hospitality and excellent arrangements made for the Summit.

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