

Statement
by H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai,
Deputy Prime Minister
and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand,
at the 17th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting
on 1 April 2021, via teleconference

Dr. Abulkalam Abdul Momen,
Dr. Tandi Dorji,
Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar,
U Ko Ko Hlaing,
Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali,
Mr. Dinesh Chandra Rupasinghe Gunawardena,
Mr. Tharaka Balasuriya,
Mr. Chair,
Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
All colleagues,

1. Greetings from Bangkok, Thailand At the very outset, I wish to commend Sri Lanka for your able and dedicated Chairmanship since 2019 up to this penultimate year of our silver jubilee, leading us to accomplish much together in spite of the challenges brought upon by the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. I join my colleagues in welcoming His Excellency Tenzin Lekphell [เต็นซิน เล็กเฟล], the new Secretary-General of BIMSTEC. You can count on Thailand's full support.

3. The fact that BIMSTEC continues to thrive, despite many global shocks especially COVID-19, demonstrates the resiliency and cohesiveness of our group. Together, we have overcome a good number of challenges and made substantive progress.

4. Thailand welcomes the successful conclusion of the seven outcome documents, and looks forward to their adoption at upcoming 5th BIMSTEC Summit. I am particularly pleased about the achievement we made on the BIMSTEC Charter. As a full-fledged inter-governmental organization, BIMSTEC can better support cooperation among Member States in areas vital to post-

pandemic economic recovery, paving the way toward regional growth and prosperity.

5. Another crucial achievement over the past two years is the rationalization of 14 areas of cooperation into 7 sectors, each with a corresponding Lead Country. As the Lead Country in Connectivity, Thailand would like to share some ideas:

6. First, our economic recovery will depend on how quickly we can re-establish and expand physical connectivity in the region. We are pleased to see the finalization of the Master Plan on Transport Connectivity and call for its implantation along with other agreements that will “knit” regional logistics together, including the Coastal Shipping Agreement and the Motor Vehicle Agreement.

7. Second, we must work to improve our “soft” connectivity, particularly energy connectivity, digital connectivity, as well as regulatory connectivity through trade and investment facilitation.

8. Third, people-to people connectivity is the basis for creating a truly connected region. Our diversity is our strength, at the same time we share many similarities that can help bridge our differences. Let us support activities that bring our young professionals, our future leaders, in various fields together in an exchange of ideas and best practices.

Excellencies,
Colleagues,

9. In every crisis, there is an opportunity. The COVID-19 pandemic is certainly a wake-up call. We have been pursuing growth on a path of unsustainable and unbalanced way of life. The “New Normal” can actually give us a clean break from our old ways, allowing us to pursue a paradigm shift so that we can attain a more balanced relationship between humans and all aspects of life. Thus, striking a “Balance of Things” is a must for our sustainable future.

10. As the next Chair, Thailand believes BIMSTEC can serve as a platform to assist Member States to “Build Back Smarter and Stronger.” In Thailand, we are

exploring the “Bio-Circular-Green or BCG Economy Model” as the strategy for post-COVID recovery process. The BCG Model builds on rich biodiversity and natural resources, focusing on economic growth based on efficient use of resources, waste reduction and low-carbon emission. We envision that BCG could very well be a new economic paradigm that strives for a balanced and sustainable growth.

11. The BCG Model is particularly pertinent to BIMSTEC because of our great cultural and biological diversity, which is the source of our economic and innovative potential. Technology and innovation will be the key drivers of the BCG Model to achieve an environmentally sustainable economy. To this end, we should foster cooperation to promote affordable innovation that create value in the regional supply chain while minimizing environmental impact. We can also promote complementarities between the BCG Model, Blue Economy and Mountain Economy.

Excellencies,

12. Thailand is confident that BIMSTEC will continue to be a strong and supportive platform that fosters cooperation and partnership among Member States to serve the interests of the people. Through the spirit of cooperation, solidarity, and partnership, we can turn confrontation and competition into collaboration, creating a peaceful environment where we can launch great initiatives toward achieving an equitable, balanced and sustainable growth. Going forward, Thailand is committed to advancing deeper cooperation with all Member States in building a stronger and more resilient BIMSTEC during our upcoming Chairmanship. As a well-known industrialist once said:

“Coming together is a beginning.
Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success.”

But for all of us here, beyond the success, is putting our heads, hearts, minds, and spirit under the BIMSTEC Charter in the years ahead. Let’s do it neatly.

13.I thank you.
