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வெளிநாட்டு அமைச்சு
FOREIGN MINISTRY

ජනරජ මහා විදුලි මණ්ඩල, කොළඹ 1, ශ්‍රී ලංකාව, குடியரசு கட்டிடம், கொழும்பு 1, Republic Building, Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

Media Release

Foreign Minister calls for early conclusion of Charter of the Association of BIMSTEC Speakers and Parliamentarians at the 17th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting

Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, called for early conclusion of the Charter of the Association of BIMSTEC Speakers and Parliamentarians, in his welcome address at the 17th Ministerial Meeting of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), comprising of Bangladeshi, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. This event was held virtually on 1st April 2021 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The Foreign Minister informed that the platform would provide Speakers and Parliamentarians space for greater understanding, trust and friendship and to exchange ideas and information on parliamentary practices and commitment on democratic principles.

The Foreign Minister was elected as Chair of the meeting and State Minister for Regional Cooperation Tharaka Balasuriya led the Sri Lanka delegation at the meeting. On 31st March 2021, Foreign Secretary Admiral Professor Jayanath Colombage led the Sri Lanka delegation at the Special Senior Officials meeting which preceded the Ministerial Meeting.

The Foreign Minister also emphasized the need to focus on expediting the adoption of the BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Master Plan which was finalized by the Third Working Group and the Asian Development Bank. The Minister stated transport connectivity which include coastal shipping, waterways, ports and harbours used over centuries and today road connections and air cargo capable of withstanding future disruptions, is vital for the supply chains, people to people contact and development of the region.

The Foreign Minister welcomed the newly appointed Secretary General Mr. Tenzin Lekphell from Bhutan, and wished him success in leading the BIMSTEC Secretariat and pledged Sri Lanka's support to all his endeavors.

The BIMISTEC Ministers reviewed the progress made since the fourth BIMSTEC Summit held in Kathmandu in 2018, where Sri Lanka was elected as Chair.

State Minister Balasuriya said that Sri Lanka fully focused its energies and worked closely with Member States to finalize the BIMSTEC Charter, building on the 1997 Bangkok Declaration. This Charter defines the long term vision and priorities for cooperation, delineates roles and responsibilities of different layers of institutional structure and decision making processes. In addition he stated that the Member States also prioritized and rationalized sectors and subsectors of the organization where Sri Lanka agreed to lead the sector on Science, Technology and Innovation with sub sectors

Technology, Health and Human Resource Development. He stated that the relevant line agencies in Sri Lanka are developing a programme of action for the sector taking into consideration also the gaps exposed in the relevant areas by the pandemic.

He informed that the current pandemic has amply demonstrated the importance of technology. In this connection Sri Lanka is also getting ready to host the Technology Transfer Facility in Sri Lanka upon conclusion of the Memorandum of Association at the 5th BIMSTEC Summit.

The Ministers noted with appreciation the extensive measures taken by member States of BIMSTEC in responding and supporting Member States to face challenges posed by the COVID 19 pandemic and urged member states to mobilize all relevant sectors and sub sectors to take collective measures to combat the challenges of poverty, natural disasters, climate change, pandemics and other public health emergencies, terrorism and transnational crimes, and food and energy security through partnerships and joint actions.

While noting with appreciation the extensive measures taken by Member States of BIMSTEC, State Minister further noted that the COVID-19 has devastated economies of member states in various degrees and the BIMSTEC region no longer enjoys US\$3 trillion economy, which accounts for 4 per cent of the global GDP and 3.7 per cent of the global trade. Therefore, he urged Member States to continue to share experiences, including success, challenges and lessons learnt in building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic through inclusive, resilient sustainable recovery strategies and investments.

The Sri Lanka Delegation informed the meeting that the date to host the 5th BIMSTEC Summit will be informed after consultations with Member States through the BIMSTEC Secretariat in the coming months.

The Ministers approved the finalized BIMSTEC Agreements, Conventions and MoUs and other documents and instruments including the Ministerial Joint Statement envisaged to be signed /adopted at the 5th BIMSTEC Summit.

The Member States delegations were led by His Excellency Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen, Hon. Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, HE Dr. Tandi Dorji, Hon. Foreign Minister of Bhutan, His Excellency Dr. S.Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs of India, H.E. U Ko Ko Hlaing, Union Minister, Ministry of International Cooperation Myanmar, Hon. Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, Minister for Foreign Affairs Nepal, Hon. Tharaka Balasuriya, State Minister of Regional Cooperation of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and HE Mr. Don Paramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand.

The delegation from Sri Lanka also comprised PM Amza, Additional Secretary, Economic Affairs, Anzul Jhan, Acting Director General, Economic Affairs, T H R Silva, Deputy Legal Affairs and Kalani Dharmasena, Executive Assistant of Economic Affairs of the Foreign Ministry.

Foreign Ministry
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