

Secretary General's remarks at the BIMSTEC MILEX 2018
Pune, India, 16 September 2018

- His Excellency Shubhash Bharme, Hon'ble Minister of State for Defense, Government of the Republic of India;
- Leaders of Delegations to BIMSTEC MILEX 2018;
- Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen: *Good morning.*

01. It gives me great pleasure to join you on the occasion of BIMSTEC Multinational Field Training Exercise 2018, the first major collaborative exercise involving the armed forces of BIMSTEC Member States. I thank the Government of India for initiating, coordinating and organizing this event in which all BIMSTEC Member States have participated either in full capacity or in the capacity of observer. I also thank the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India for inviting me to attend the closing ceremony of the BIMSTEC MILEX 2018.

02. Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Sector is today one of the most active sectors of BIMSTEC cooperation, thanks to the leadership role played by India and to the strong commitment on the part of Member States to combat the menace of terrorism. The Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (JWG-CTTC) and its six sub-groups¹ are regularly meeting to discuss ways and means to strengthen cooperation in areas like intelligence sharing, financing of terrorism, law

¹ Sub-Groups namely, i) Sub-Group on Intelligence Sharing (SGIS); ii) Sub-Group on Legal and Law Enforcement Issues (SGLLEI); iii) Sub-Group on Anti- Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (SGAML-CFT); iv) Sub-Group on Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursor Chemicals (SGNDPSPC); v) Sub-Group on Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration; and vi) Sub-Group on Cooperation on Countering Radicalization and Terrorism.

enforcement and countering radicalization. Following the decision of the Goa Leaders' Retreat in 2016, the BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs have met twice – in New Delhi in 2017 and in Dhaka in 2018 – and is scheduled to meet again in 2019. The Fourth BIMSTEC Summit Declaration expressed determination to strengthen cooperation and coordination among the law enforcement, intelligence and security agencies; and decide to hold meetings at the level of BIMSTEC Home Ministers.

03. Joint military exercises, both bi-lateral and multilateral, have become more of a norm rather than an exception in today's world. The Military Exercise just concluded is an example of collaborative measure undertaken by the BIMSTEC Member States with an aim to promote strategic alignment among their armed forces to counter terrorism and to share the best practices in the area of counter terrorism. The BIMSTEC MILEX 2018 can be seen as Member States' efforts to deal with terrorism and transnational crime in a more comprehensive way.

04. Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen: Our Leaders in the recently concluded BIMSTEC Summit affirmed the solemn commitment to make the Bay of Bengal Region peaceful, prosperous and sustainable by building on our common strengths through our collective efforts. We hope that with both civilian and military cooperation, BIMSTEC will achieve a greater height in socio-economic development in the days ahead. Thank you.