

Statement by H.E. Indra Mani Pandey
BIMSTEC Secretary General during the General Debate on
‘Opportunities and Solutions for a Sustainable Future,’
82nd Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and
the Pacific (ESCAP)
Bangkok, 20 April 2026.

Thank you Chair

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Afternoon to you all, Namaskaar,

It's a great honour and privilege to address 82nd Session of UNESCAP as Secretary General of BIMSTEC. I wish to thank Executive Secretary of UNESCAP for her kind invitation. BIMSTEC shares the theme of this Session, the goal of inclusive, resilient and sustainable development.

As pointed out by speakers before me, the world is facing profound challenges. It has been noted that global multilateral institutions have been facing grave limitations. With global multilateralism under stress, the salience of plurilateralism, minilateralism and regionalism has naturally grown. Regional organizations like BIMSTEC are being seen as suitable platforms to forge cooperation amongst the countries located in a region or sub-region. A number of speakers have called for strengthening regional cooperation.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

7 BIMSTEC member States, located adjacent and close to Bay of Bengal, face similar developmental and transnational security challenges which they realize that they cannot deal with alone. Hence, they are keen to forge regional cooperation under BIMSTEC.

Bay of Bengal region is a geo strategically significant part of Asia and the Pacific. 7 BIMSTEC member States are home to 1.8 billion people; they had in 2024 combined GDP of over \$5.0 trillion and combined external trade of almost \$3.0 trillion. A significant part of global trade and energy, flows through the waters of Bay of Bengal.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

BIMSTEC, established in June 1997 by its 4 founding members - Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand - as a platform to facilitate cooperation amongst the countries of South Asia and South East Asia. It has since emerged as a

vibrant regional organization with 7 members, five from South Asia - Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka - and 2 from South East Asia - Myanmar and Thailand.

BIMSTEC is an Inter-Governmental Regional Organisation, with its Permanent Secretariat located in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Since its inception, almost 29 years ago, BIMSTEC has made significant progress. It has adopted its own Charter and has institutionalized the requisite core and sectoral mechanisms.

BIMSTEC has a comprehensive agenda, comprising 18 sectors of cooperation, clubbed in 7 Groups with designation of each of 7 member States as Lead member for one of the 7 Groups. The Agenda of BIMSTEC is fully aligned with SDGs Agenda 2030.

BIMSTEC has held numerous Summits and Ministerial and Senior Officials Meetings, including Sectoral Ministerial and Senior Officials Meetings. There are sectoral joint working groups, expert groups and their sub-groups to facilitate cooperation in all the sectors. These Groups have prepared Action Plans and for cooperation in various Sectors which are being implemented.

In order to institutionalize cooperation in various sectors, BIMSTEC has already established 2 Centers of Excellence - Centre of Excellence for weather and climate and Centre of Excellence for Energy. Further, BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory has been set up in Paro, Bhutan, and BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility is being set up in Colombo, Sri Lanka. 8 more Centres of Excellence are being set up.

BIMSTEC has already concluded two Conventions and 3 more Conventions are being concluded. BIMSTEC Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation was signed last year. Besides, a number of MoUs and MoAs have also been signed. BIMSTEC has been seeking developmental partnerships with the non-members as well as the UN, International and Regional Organisations.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

BIMSTEC has been working together with UNESCAP, including hosting together sector specific side-events. BIMSTEC is open to engage in partnerships with other regional organizations as well as UN and International Organizations.

I commend the UNESCAP for its initiatives to engage closely with regional organizations, like BIMSTEC, in areas which are our shared priorities. In this regard, I welcome the opportunity being provided to regional organizations to share their perspectives. I also commend UNESCAP for its initiative to bring together various regional and sub-regional organizations in Asia and the Pacific

in order to enable them to engage in exchange of views on their vision, agenda and priorities and to explore the opportunities for colloquial among themselves.

I would like to conclude by extending my gratitude to you all for your kind attention. Thank You! Namaskaar!