

**Remarks by H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, BIMSTEC Secretary General at the Seminar on  
"Young Leaders, Sustainable Futures : Advancing the SDGs Together"  
BIISS Auditorium, Dhaka | 09 June 2026.**

Professor Dr. S M Abdul-Awal, Principal Coordinator for SDG Affairs, Prime Minister's Office; Major General A S M Ridwanur Rahman, awc, afwc, psc, G, Director General, BIISS; Mr. Sudhir Muralidharan, UNOPS Country Manager in Bangladesh; Distinguished Participants, Representatives from the Government of Bangladesh, Developmental Partners, Academia and Civil Society, Young Leaders, members of BIISS

Namaskar, Assalamu Alaikum, Good Morning to you all!

It's a great pleasure to join this Seminar on "Young Leaders, Sustainable Futures: Advancing the SDGs Together." I am grateful to UNOPS Bangladesh and BIISS for inviting me. I congratulate and commend UNOPS Bangladesh and BIISS for organizing this timely dialogue and for placing young people at the center of the sustainable development agenda. UN SDGs represent the universally agreed developmental agenda since 2015.

The countries of the BIMSTEC region are home to nearly 1.8 billion people, of whom a significant proportion are young women and men. This demographic strength represents one of our greatest assets. Young people are not merely stakeholders in development; they are also key contributors to development as innovators, entrepreneurs, community leaders, and agents of change. We must nurture our youth and create enabling environment in order to realise our demographic dividend.

As we approach final years of the 2030 Agenda, the world is confronting multiple and interconnected crises, including crumbling of the rules-based international order. The ongoing war in the Gulf region has resulted in disruption of trade and essential supplies, threatening energy and food security of the countries in our region, including Bangladesh. We continue to face other grave challenges to our development and security, such as Climate change, environmental degradation, digital divide, unemployment, inequality and social exclusion. It is highly unlikely that we will be able to achieve SDG Goals by 2030. Addressing developmental challenges requires fresh ideas, innovative solutions and inclusive leadership. Young people are uniquely positioned to contribute to the Governmental efforts.

Across the BIMSTEC region, we are witnessing inspiring examples of youth-led innovation in climate action, digital entrepreneurship, social development, education and community resilience. By investing in youth skills, knowledge and leadership, we can unlock tremendous potential for sustainable and inclusive growth.

Regional cooperation has an important role to play in this regard. BIMSTEC remains committed to fostering collaboration among its member states in order to assist them in facing developmental and transnational security challenges. We have a vast agenda, covering most of the SDG Goals. We believe that empowering young people through regional partnerships can help build a more prosperous, resilient, and sustainable future for our region. Under BIMSTEC, a number of Youth

Summits and Conclaves have been organised to facilitate youth exchanges and nurture youth leadership. We will continue to prioritise our focus on youth and women.

I am particularly encouraged by the emphasis of today's discussion on localization of the SDGs. Sustainable development can only be achieved when global aspirations are translated into local action. Young people, working closely with communities, local governments, academic institutions and development partners, can serve as powerful catalysts for change at the grassroots level.

As we look ahead, it is essential that we create meaningful opportunities where young people can participate in decision-making, contribute to policy discussions and shape the future they wish to inherit. Their voices, ideas and aspirations must be reflected in our development strategies and in our initiatives for bilateral and regional cooperation.

I encourage all young participants present today to continue challenging conventional thinking, embracing innovation and working collaboratively across sectors and borders. The future of our region depends on the energy, creativity and leadership of our youth.

Let us work together to ensure that youth are not left behind and that the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals becomes a reality for all segments of our societies, particularly the weaker sections. Even if we miss the timeline of 2030, we must continue to make efforts to realise the SDGs.

I wish the seminar success in realising and look forward to the fruitful discussions that will follow.

Thank you. Namaskar!