Annex III

Remarks by H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, BIMSTEC Secretary General
at the 1st Meeting of BIMSTEC Senior Officials of Home Ministries (SOM-H)
12 October 2026
New Delhi, India

Excellency, Shri Govind Mohan, Union Home Secretary of India; Excellencies,
Distinguished Senior Officials and members of BIMSTEC Delegations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Namaskaar, A very good morning to you all!

I extend, on behalf of the BIMSTEC Secretariat, a very warm welcome to you all to the 1st Meeting of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials of Home Ministries.

At the outset, I wish to express my gratitude to the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Government of India, for hosting the inaugural Meeting of Senior Officials of Home Ministries of the BIMSTEC member States. I also thank the Ministry of Home Affairs of India for its leadership in advancing BIMSTEC cooperation in Security and Disaster Management Sectors. I also thank the Ministry of Home Affairs for excellent arrangements made for the Meeting and the warm hospitality extended to all the Delegations.

The Meeting of the Home Ministers is a momentous occasion for cooperation in security sector under BIMSTEC. The idea of meeting of Home Ministers of the BIMSTEC member States, to be preceded by a meeting of Senior Officials of the Home Ministries, was first conceived more than 8 years ago at the 4th BIMSTEC Summit in 2018 in Kathmandu. I am glad that the inaugural Meeting has been convened, even if after 8 years.

The BIMSTEC member States have always accorded a high priority to cooperation in security sector in view of the fact that they face similar transnational security challenges which they cannot fully deal with either acting alone or cooperating only bilaterally with their neighbors. These challenges are not only transnational in nature but also regional in nature and require concerted cooperation and collective action by all the countries in Bay of Bengal region. Moreover, these challenges are not only terrestrial in nature, they have maritime dimension. The Bay of Bengal is a shared maritime space for the BIMSTEC member States and it is regarded as a shared maritime security space. Therefore, the importance of countries around Bay of Bengal acting together to deal with their shared security challenges cannot be overstressed.

The JWG on CTTC, with its five Sub-Groups, has, since 2005, through its 11 Meetings so far, made remarkable progress in developing institutional frameworks, including Conventions, MoUs, Action Plans. etc. The Secretariat will brief you on the significant progress made in various areas of cooperation. The Secretariat will also brief you on the progress made during the Meetings of the National Security Advisors/Chiefs. They have met 5 times so far since their first meeting in 2017. They last met here in New Delhi in July 2026. I will refrain from going into details in view of the limited time that I have.

Notwithstanding the significant progress under JWG, it has long been felt that security cooperation under BIMSTEC must be regularly reviewed, supervised, guided and led by Home Secretaries and Home Ministers. In this context, the first Meeting of BIMSTEC Home Secretaries/ Senior Officials of the Home Ministries assumes a high importance. The Home Ministers and Secretaries have been entrusted by the BIMSTEC Leaders with the task of reviewing the progress made so far in dealing with the existing security challenges; identifying the institutional and procedural weaknesses and impediments; delineating steps to address the shortcomings; proposing measures to expand and strengthen the existing cooperation; identifying new and emerging challenges to the Security of the BIMSTEC member States; and providing guidance and direction for future cooperation.

Since, in almost all the BIMSTEC member States, Home Ministries are also responsible for disaster management, it has been decided that the Meetings of Home Secretaries and Home Ministers should also have on their agenda regional cooperation in disaster management. Hence, the presentation by the Secretariat shall also cover the progress made in regional cooperation in disaster management. In view of the recent havocs wrecked by natural disasters in our member States, particularly in Nepal and Thailand, the importance of cooperation for a coordinated BIMSTEC response to disasters striking our member States cannot be overstated. India has been acknowledged globally as the first responder in cases of natural disasters in the region and beyond and I want to thank India for its initiative to set up a BIMSTEC Centre for Disaster Management.

As you are aware, we have in place the requisite mechanisms for forging cooperation in various areas. We also have agreed requisite Plans of Action, Work Plans, MoUs and Conventions. Some of these have recently been finalized and some are being finalized. They represent collective commitment of the member States to cooperate in dealing with the shared security challenges they face.

The challenge before us is to ensure that we are able to translate the institutional progress into tangible cooperation on the ground in a coordinated, effective and efficient manner so that benefits of regional security and disaster management cooperation become apparent to the people in our member States. In my view the JWG and its Sub-Groups should meet more frequently and there should be systems in place for making progress during inter-Sessional period. It may be useful to designate in Home Ministries an Officer as BIMSTEC Coordinator to monitor implementation on a regular basis.

There is also a need for periodic consultation between the Ministries of Home Affairs and BIMSTEC Divisions of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs/ External Affairs to identify the bottlenecks in follow-up and action by other member States. The Secretariat has been supporting, monitoring the implementation and will continue to support by sharing regularly with the member States the Outstanding Points of Action pertaining to cooperation in security and disaster management sectors.

The challenges to implementation have been highlighted in the draft Policy Brief on Strengthening BIMSTEC Security Cooperation: From Dialogue to Implementation, prepared by the Secretariat. It was considered by the 11th Meeting of JWG. I am glad that the Secretariat's recommendation for establishing a BIMSTEC Centre for Regional Security Cooperation (BCRSC) was accepted by the 11th Meeting of the JWG. The Secretariat request India to share expeditiously its Concept Note on the proposed BIMSTEC Centre for Regional Security Cooperation (BCRSC), which will provide greater institutional continuity and coherence; facilitate follow up and coordination; and enable action on new and emerging security challenges.

Excellencies,

I would like to urge you all to give particular attention to finalisation of the draft Delhi Declaration to be adopted at the 1st Meeting of the BIMSTEC Home Ministers tomorrow. A substantive and forward-looking Delhi Declaration would provide the necessary political impetus and strategic direction to BIMSTEC Security cooperation.

I am confident that the deliberations at this inaugural Meeting of the Senior Officials of Home Ministries will provide a clear and forward-looking roadmap for cooperation in Security and Disaster Management Sectors under BIMSTEC and strengthen our collective resolve to address both traditional and emerging security challenges in the Bay of Bengal region.

The Secretariat remains fully committed to working closely with all Member States in taking forward the outcomes of this meeting. I wish the Meeting every success and I am looking forward to its valuable outcomes. Thank you. Namaskar

*****