Annex – III

Special Remarks by the BIMSTEC Secretary General H.E. Indra Mani Pandey at the Eighth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (BNPTT) held on 14-15 October 2026 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

- **Excellencies,**
- **Distinguished Members of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks,**
- **Distinguished Delegates from the BIMSTEC member States**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Namaskar! A very good morning to you all!

It gives me a great pleasure to address the Eighth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks, being held in beautiful city of Colombo.

I would like to begin by commending the Government of Sri Lanka and the Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute (LKI) for hosting this Meeting, which is a reflection of the continued commitment of the Government of Sri Lanka to foster cooperation among the think tanks, which have been making valuable contributions to advancement of regional cooperation under BIMSTEC through their research and analysis, policy briefs and valuable recommendations.

Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates,

As you are aware, the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks was established pursuant to the decision of our Leaders at the Second BIMSTEC Summit in 2008. Ever since, it has served as a vital platform for bringing together scholars, researchers and policy analysts from the BIMSTEC member states. A number of its recommendations have been positively considered as policy inputs, which will be later highlighted in the briefing by the Secretariat.

The role of think tanks today has become more important today than ever as we endeavor to respond to the new and emerging developmental, security and technological challenges. The BNPTT's role assumes a high importance in bridging

the gap between research and policymaking; supporting the BIMSTEC's mechanisms; and contributing to translation of commitments into tangible benefits for the people in our member States. The BNPTT has also contributed in strengthening the linkages among the academia, researchers, think tanks etc. resulting in better understanding and broader exchange of thoughts and ideas.

Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates,

The themes selected for this Meeting of BNPTT are timely and highly relevant and also correspond to the sectors led by Sri Lanka: Science, Technology and Innovation, Health and Human Resource Development. The Secretariat, in its briefing, will update you on significant developments in various Sectors on BIMSTEC's Agenda since your last Meeting.

I look forward to your deliberations, aimed at delineating practical recommendations on strengthening collaborative research, innovation and entrepreneurship, technology-sharing, research-to-policy and research-to-market linkages, through the Technology Transfer Facility and other regional mechanisms.

I encourage you to share your insights as to how Science, technology and innovation can be leveraged to address the unprecedented climate-related catastrophes that our region is facing. In particular, I would welcome perspectives on how innovative technologies, scientific research, data-driven solutions and stronger regional collaboration can help strengthen climate resilience, improve disaster preparedness and support sustainable and inclusive development.

I look forward to your recommendations on strengthening coordinated regional responses to shared health challenges, research and knowledge-sharing, digital health and cooperation among health institutions, universities and research organisations.

Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates,

Human Resource Development is equally important to the future of our region. Technological transformation, digitalization, Artificial Intelligence and changing patterns of employment are reshaping the skills required by our economies. I hope

the BNPTT will offer practical recommendations on education, skills development, upskilling and reskilling, academic and professional exchanges, and stronger linkages among education, employment, industry and technological transformation.

Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates,

I wish to draw your attention to the proposal pertaining to inclusion of think tanks, other than the BNPTT members, in the BNPTT Meetings with a view to making the BNPTT more inclusive, diverse and enriched platform. At the Seventh BNPTT Meeting in Kathmandu, the Secretariat had presented possible modalities for wider engagement of the relevant think tanks and institutions. In this regard, as decided, RIS India has prepared a draft proposal. I would request you to deliberate on the proposal with a view to reaching consensus at this Meeting itself with a view to its implementation of the proposal with effect from the next Meeting of the BNPTT.

In addition, I would like to request all the designated BNPTT think tanks to give priority to research and policy contributions in the Sectors led by the member States they represent. For instance, the LKI of Sri Lanka could prioritize work on Science, Technology and Innovation, health, and human resource development Sectors, which are led by Sri Lanka

Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates,

The key task before the member States and the Secretariat is to ensure timely and efficient implementation of the decisions, Plans of Action and the initiatives already agreed within BIMSTEC. The BNPTT think tanks have an important role in identifying how the commitments can be translated into tangible initiatives more effectively; how regional initiatives can produce measurable outcomes; and how research, policy, innovation and implementation can be more closely connected.

As you consider various measures, I would like to encourage you to make focused, and concrete recommendations. Further, I also encourage you to assess the progress made in regional cooperation in other Sectors and offer your insights and perspectives on other priority areas of cooperation. BIMSTEC would like to benefit from the knowledge and experience of the BNPTT think tanks and your deliberations

during this Meeting would add significant value to the deliberations and decisions at the Meetings of our Core and Sectoral mechanisms.

I wish the 8th Meeting of BNPTT every success and I am looking forward to tangible recommendations emerging from your deliberations.

Thank you, Namaskar!