

**Statement made by Ambassador Sumith Nakandala, Secretary General BIMSTEC at the
Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction on 03 November 2016
New Delhi, India**

Madam Chairperson,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

01. BIMSTEC is delighted to be taking part of the First Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and I am very grateful to the Government of India and UNISDR for making our participation possible.
02. BIMSTEC was established in 1997 and is seen as the link between South Asia and South East Asia, comprising 5 Member States from South Asia and 2 from South East Asia. BIMSTEC has 14 priority areas of cooperation and Environment and Disaster Management is one of them. Each sector is led by a Member State. In 2011, the Government of India has established the BIMSTEC Weather and Climate Centre.
03. As has seen disasters have no national boundaries and therefore regional cooperation become very relevant. What is more pertinent is that the Bay of Bengal region is proven to various natural disasters. Sendai Framework provides pragmatic templates for addressing disaster risk reduction in the region.
04. At the BIMSTEC Leaders' Retreat held in Goa, India on 16 October 2016, the Hon. Prime Minister of India announced the Annual BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise and India has taken the initiative to hold the First such exercise.
05. The Outcome Document issued after the BIMSTEC Leaders' Retreat, refers to the collective political determination of the BIMSTEC Leaders on Disaster Management. It states, *inter alia*, "We encourage closer cooperation in disaster management through joint exercises, sharing of information including early warning system, adoption of preventive measures, joint action on relief and rehabilitation, and capacity building. We agree to build on the existing capacities in the region and to explore the possibility of establishing partnerships with other regional and international entities in this sector." Now it is the responsibility of the BIMSTEC to act on these directives. We are looking forward to work with regional and international organizations dealing with disaster risk reduction and management.
06. We are also grateful to the Hon. Prime Minister of India for proposing 10 point agenda for pragmatically addressing the issues related to the disaster risk reduction in the region, which I feel that the Conference must consider for implementation.

07. BIMSTEC is aware that much of the important work has already been done by UNESCAP. The initial idea of establishing regional cooperation in Bay of Bengal region was fostered by UNESCAP. We would like to continue our collective work with UNESCAP on disaster risk reduction sector. It is important to emphasize that any meaningful regional cooperation entails application of highest capabilities of modern science and technology. In terms of fostering sub-regional cooperation, BIMSTEC provides an ideal inter-governmental platform.
08. I hope that the importance of deepening regional cooperation will be appropriately reflected in the final outcome document of the Ministerial Conference.
