



Subregional Office
SOUTH AND SOUTH-WEST ASIA



BIMSTEC

Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral
Technical and Economic Cooperation

Side Event at the 80th Session of the Commission

Leveraging Digital Innovation for Promoting Cross-Border Connectivity in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal (BBIN) Subregion

24 April 2024 (14:45-16:00 Bangkok time)

MR-A, Level 1, United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC), Bangkok

Background and objectives

The BBIN subregion – constituted by Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal – has considerable trade and industrial potential that is yet to be realized, principally due to lack of efficient and cost-effective connectivity. High trade costs constrain the growth of trade-oriented industries in the region. Better connectivity is necessary to improve efficiency of supply chains and formation of value chains within BBIN. This would in turn help to enhance the competitiveness of the subregion’s manufacturing sectors in the global markets, delivering new opportunities for economic prosperity and sustainable development.

Improving connectivity in the subregion requires trade and transport facilitation reforms oriented on modernizing customs administration, streamlining trade and transport procedures, and upgrading land ports. Digital technologies such as paperless trade systems and electronic cargo tracking systems (ECTS) can help to bring about these reforms and transform the logistics sector for the benefit of traders and investors.

Several initiatives to modernize trade procedures and logistics are underway in the BBIN countries. While electronic interfaces and single window systems have been introduced in all four countries their deployment is to be scaled up to cover all ports and transit points. Huge efficiency gains are offered by harmonization of trade and transport operations utilizing advanced cargo information systems, electronic cargo tracking using satellite positioning and communication technologies, application of electronic seals in containers etc.

The objective of the side event is to explore how digitalization can offer better and more efficient tools and solutions for improving connectivity in the BBIN subregion. The discussions will aim to; (1) identify priority areas for utilization of digital technologies to optimize cross-border connectivity, and (2) recommend collaborative actions by BBIN countries for advancing the agenda of digitalization in connectivity.

Organization: The event will be organized by ESCAP Subregional for South and South-West Asia with the support of the Transport Division and the Trade, Investment and Innovation Division of ESCAP.

Participation: The event will be attended by BIMSTEC Secretary-General, Permanent Representatives to ESCAP, MOFA Thailand (BIMSTEC Chair), authorities responsible for land ports of the BBIN countries, trade and transport experts and interested member States representatives and partners.

Tentative Programme (1 hour 15 minutes)	
24 April 2024	
14:45-14:50	<p>Introduction and moderation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Mikiko Tanaka, Head, ESCAP South and South-West Asia Office
14:50-15:00	<p>Opening Remarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP • H.E. Mr. Indra Mani Pandey, Secretary-General, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)
15:00-15:10	<p>Presentations on digital applications in trade and transport: ESCAP led initiatives for technical assistance and capacity building:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Rupa Chanda, Director, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, ESCAP • Ms. Azhar Jaimurzina Ducrest, Chief, Transport Connectivity and Logistics Section, Transport Division, ESCAP
15:10-15:30	<p>Interventions from BBIN land port/customs authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bangladesh Land Port Authority, Government of Bangladesh • Land Ports Authority of India, Government of India • Department of Revenue and Customs, Ministry of Finance, Royal Government of Bhutan • Department of Customs, Ministry of Finance, Government of Nepal

15:30-15:40	<p>Remarks by Permanent Representatives and MoFA Thailand (BIMSTEC Chair):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Mr. Mohammed Abdul Hye, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative to ESCAP, Embassy of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, Thailand • H.E. Mr. Kinzang Dorji, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative to ESCAP, Royal Bhutanese Embassy, Thailand • H.E. Mr. Nagesh Singh, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative to ESCAP, Embassy of India • H.E. Mr. Dhan Bahadur Oli, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative to ESCAP, Embassy of Nepal • Mr. Cherdchai Chaivaivid, Director-General, Department of International Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand
15:40-15:55	Open Discussion
15:55-16:00	<p>Concluding remarks and way forward Ms. Mikiko Tanaka, Head, ESCAP South and South-West Asia office</p>