Agenda 2 (b): Current and emerging policy issues for inclusive and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific: subregional perspectives

Mr./Madam Chair,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

India appreciates the efforts of UNESCAP to promote a sub-regional perspective to advance regional cooperation for sustainable development. Given the diversity of issues and challenges within the Asia-Pacific, building on a bottom-up, sub-regional approach is useful to promote cooperation in specific areas.

Connectivity, in all its dimensions, lies at the heart of a sub-regional development strategy. As a member of several multilateral and regional groupings and mechanisms such as BIMSTEC, Mekong Ganga Cooperation, IORA, SAARC, and SCO, and as a close partner of ASEAN, India has been actively promoting the connectivity agenda in the sub-regional and regional context.

It is widely acknowledged that physical connectivity must go hand in hand with digital and energy connectivity. Boosting physical connectivity, however, remains a pre-requisite for smooth flow of goods, services, and people across borders. Completion of the Trilateral Highway connecting India with Thailand through Myanmar, and its extension to other ASEAN countries connecting Northeast India to the Pacific, can be a game-changer, transforming the economies in the region. The Coastal Shipping Agreements and

Motor Vehicle Agreements among India and its regional partners, once implemented, will have the potential to open new vistas, transforming the connectivity landscape.

The nations around and proximate to the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean littoral have shared interests. The recently concluded BIMSTEC Maritime Transport Agreement will strengthen cooperation in merchant shipping and cargo transport, giving a significant boost to trade across the region.

Enhancing maritime connectivity with ASEAN countries and exploring ways to link our initiatives with ASEAN's connectivity plans remain a priority for India to catalyze trade, investment, and people to people tie.

Similarly, as the forthcoming Chair of IORA, India's endeavour will be to make the Indian Ocean a more seamless and cooperative space while contributing to build capacity, and secure safety and security in the Indian Ocean Region.

On the energy front, efforts are also underway to strengthen cross border cooperation in energy sector through electric grid interconnection to promote optimum use of renewable energy. Initiatives such as GGI-OSOWOG initiative of International Solar Alliance hold immense potential accelerate green transition.

As we rapidly digitalize commerce, infrastructure and governance, there is immense potential to enhance cross-border digital connectivity. For example, India has one of largest fintech and digital payment ecosystem. Establishing connectivity with India's Unified

Payments Interface (UPI) and payment systems integration can catalyze trade, investment, and tourism, boosting economic networks at subregional and regional levels.

Excellencies, India has multifaceted and very special engagement with the Pacific Island countries. It is anchored in our bilateral ties, and in mechanisms such as the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC). Our Pacific friends have benefited from the India-UN Development Partnership Fund, which supports demand-driven sustainable development projects. India leads several global initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Green Grids Initiative - One Sun, One World, One Grid, the Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS), the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), and the Global Biofuel Alliance which benefit our Pacific partners and other Small Island Developing States.

Thank you Chair.