



India

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## **COUNTRY STATEMENT**

**by**

**H. E. Mr. Harsh Vardhan Shringla,  
Ambassador of India  
to the Kingdom Thailand and  
Permanent Representative to UNESCAP**

**at the plenary of the  
70<sup>th</sup> UNESCAP Commission Session**

**Bangkok**

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**Statement of India**  
**Ministerial Segment**  
**of the 70<sup>th</sup> Commission Session of the United Nations ESCAP**  
**Agenda Item 8: “Policy Issues for the Asia-Pacific Region”**  
**Delivered by H.E. Mr. Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Ambassador of India to**  
**the Kingdom of Thailand and Permanent Representative to UNESCAP**

Mr. Chairman,  
Madam Executive Secretary,  
Excellencies, Ministers,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to begin by underlining the strong commitment of the Government of India for UNESCAP and its role in regional cooperation. India has been privileged to host and support ESCAP's Sub regional Office for South and South-West Asia in New Delhi and its active programme of policy analysis and capacity-building support and promotion of regional economic cooperation.

Since its inception over 60 years ago, UNESCAP, as a regional UN Commission, has made significant contributions to our region. India has actively engaged with UNESCAP on all its major regional initiatives. These have included a focus on rebuilding modern transport connectivity for the region dating back to 1950s. With the onset of rapid globalization, connectivity issues have attained a growing importance for promoting prosperity. The Asia-Pacific region has benefited from globalization and emerged as a significant pole of global economic activity. There remain, however, areas where the potential for trade and connectivity are yet to be fully realized. We

are convinced that realizing this potential will greatly enhance economic growth and development opportunities available to all concerned.

Mr. Chairman,

The newly elected government in India is deeply committed to regional cooperation and connectivity. The Prime Minister of India Mr. Narendra Modi invited all leaders of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to attend his inauguration ceremony. In a letter to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh H.E. Shaikh Hasina, the Prime Minister stated, and I quote, *"I sincerely hope we can all work together to foster a new era of cooperation and connectivity across the South Asian region, which will ignite our collective surge to prosperity."* His thought resonates with the theme of this session.

The Government of India proposes to actively continue its efforts to re-build connectivity with countries in its neighbourhood and beyond. In this context, my Government has been working with Myanmar and Thailand in establishing the 'Trilateral Highway' connecting India to Thailand through Myanmar. India is also part of the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway Network. It is engaged with Sri Lanka and Maldives in strengthening maritime connectivity and with Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan in developing rail, road and multimodal connectivity. These initiatives not only bring the countries physically closer through infrastructure, but also build inter-linkages that cement friendship, promote joint prosperity and enable mutually reinforcing support in times of need, such as in dealing with natural calamities.



Shared prosperity through inclusive development is also an important focus of the new government's development strategy. India is fully committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and is an active partner in discussions contributing to the post-2015 Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Considerable success has been achieved in the last couple of decades by the governments of our region in implementing the policies that have lifted hundreds of millions of their people out of poverty. However, significant challenges remain. A vast percentage of global poverty is concentrated in our region. Millions of people continue to lack access to modern energy sources, adequate housing and other basic services, education and employment opportunities. Meeting these challenges call for continued focus on poverty eradication and inclusive and sustainable development through infrastructure development, creation of employment opportunities, provision of education and health care, etc.

Fostering industrialization to create new productive job opportunities for India's youthful population is a key focus of our development strategy. India is also actively seeking to reinvest in agriculture to catalyze another technology-driven green revolution through higher productivity for food security. We expect the global regime to address the aspirations of the developing countries and the special needs of the poor, especially in areas like food security, on which we stand firm.

Mr. Chairman,

My government places great emphasis on the need to transform India into a globally competitive manufacturing hub powered by 'Skill, Scale and Speed'. To achieve this, the government is setting up world class investment and

industrial regions, particularly along Dedicated Freight and Industrial Corridors spanning the country. To increase India's share in global trade, the government is simplifying procedures and strengthening trade infrastructure to reduce transaction time and costs. A fast-track, investment friendly Public Private Partnership (PPP) mechanism and modernization of railways, ports, dedicated agri-rail networks are on top of the infrastructure agenda of the government. As a part of sustainable urbanization we have set a target of building "100 Smart Cities" that will leverage sustainability in energy consumption and environment preservation through the use of new technology. We are also focusing attention on harnessing the potential of solar energy and hydro power in a big manner.

E-governance brings empowerment, equity and efficiency. It has the power to transform peoples' lives. The backbone of my government's new ways of working will be a Digital India. IT will be used to drive re-engineering of government processes to improve service delivery and programme implementation.

India offers support to infrastructure development and institution building to countries in South and Southeast Asia and Africa and other developing regions, spending over a US\$ 1 billion annually on development partnership activities. Through its technical assistance programmes, India provides training opportunities to nearly 10,000 persons annually from 161 countries in diverse disciplines conducted by 47 institutions. Additionally, India also offers 2300 scholarships to students from other developing countries.

Some of the support that India extends to fellow developing countries includes sharing of its capabilities and capacity-building support in high technology

areas such as remote-sensing and space applications for disaster-risk reduction. The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has been sharing real time satellite data and extending capacity building support with other countries in the region as a part of the regional cooperative mechanism for drought monitoring coordinated by ESCAP. The Prime Minister of India has recently announced a new dedicated earth observation satellite for SAARC Member States.

Towards enhancing resources for development, India and its partners in BRICS recently announced the establishment of the 'New Development Bank'. As the name suggests, the bank will establish a new paradigm for supporting inclusive growth, sustainable development and economic stability, which will be rooted in the experience and challenges of the developing countries. The New Development Bank, which will offer additional long term source of development finance, has generated hope and excitement in the developing world. The Contingent Reserve Arrangement will give us an additional means of cushion against any sudden external pressures on currencies. The Bank and the Arrangement will each hold reserves of USD \$100 Billion.

In closing, I wish to reiterate India's strong support to regional cooperation for shared inclusive and sustainable development and connectivity in the Asia-Pacific region. I have no doubt that the Member States of ESCAP will use this valuable forum to work together for the shared prosperity of the region and global wellbeing.

Thank you.