Fifth Bay of Bengal Maritime Dialogue

20 – 21 May 2025
Colombo, Sri Lanka

pathfinder Foundation

"hd Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
Mediation for peace

About the Bay of Bengal Maritime Dialogue

Since 2021, the Bay of Bengal Maritime Dialogue has emerged as a pivotal platform for fostering regional cooperation and addressing critical maritime challenges. Co-hosted by the Pathfinder Foundation (PF) and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), the Bay of Bengal Maritime Dialogue convenes high-level government officials, regional leaders and international experts to identify strategies for reducing the risk of maritime conflict and mitigating the impact of marine environmental degradation in the Bay of Bengal. The annual event has garnered significant participation from Bay of Bengal littoral states and other key stakeholders, including regional organisations and diplomatic missions. By facilitating open dialogue and collaborative initiatives, the Bay of Bengal Maritime Dialogue continues to play a crucial role in enhancing regional stability and cooperation.

Cover Photo: Trincomalee Beach, Sri Lanka – by C. Lalinshan, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Fifth Bay of Bengal Maritime Dialogue

20 and 21 May 2025
Outcome Document

On 20 and 21 May 2025, the Pathfinder Foundation (PF) and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) co-hosted the Fifth Track 1.5 Bay of Bengal Maritime Dialogue in Colombo, Sri Lanka, to promote greater regional maritime cooperation in the region. Participants included high-level government officials, heads of regional organisations, and representatives from prominent think tanks from the littoral states of the Bay of Bengal (including Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand). His Excellency Ranil Wickremesinghe, Former President of Sri Lanka, delivered the Chief Guest's address. His Excellency Indra Mani Pandey, Secretary General of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), delivered the plenary address, while the keynote was presented by Prof. Peter M. Haugan, Policy Director, Institute of Marine Research and Professor at the Geophysical Institute, University of Bergen. The opening ceremony also witnessed the presence of senior members of the diplomatic community in Colombo, including heads of mission and high-level diplomats from Bangladesh, China, the European Union, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, Türkiye, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

Participants acknowledged the achievements made since the Fourth Bay of Bengal Maritime Dialogue in 2024, including the progress made by the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Maritime Security Cooperation in advancing the Guiding Principles for Law Enforcement Agencies for Interaction at Sea as well as the BIMSTEC Guidelines for the Maritime Component of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR). This outcome document summarises key takeaways from the discussions[1] and recommendations for greater regional maritime cooperation in the Bay of Bengal.[2]

Driving Regional Cooperation for Robust Maritime Governance

1. Participants acknowledged the Bay of Bengal as a region of growing strategic, economic, and environmental significance and highlighted that the future of regional stability and prosperity will be closely tied to effective maritime governance. They underscored the urgent need to strengthen regional cooperation around shared norms in the face of emerging maritime threats, including illegal,

[1] All panel discussions were held under Chatham House Rules.
[2] As in previous Bay of Bengal Maritime Dialogues, the outcomes of the latest Dialogue will be made available to the governments of the region as well as relevant regional organisations, including BIMSTEC, IORA and BOBP-IGO.

unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, cybersecurity risks, and the protection of critical underwater infrastructure. Participants recognised that good order at sea is a prerequisite for economic connectivity, environmental protection, and collective security. BIMSTEC's evolving role, together with lessons from beyond the region, such as ASEAN's experience, was cited as crucial in promoting interoperability, harmonising legal regimes, and advancing science-based dialogue in maritime affairs. Participants emphasised the importance of integrating ocean science into policy, highlighting the critical role of scientific collaboration, marine spatial planning, and evidence-based policymaking in shaping a healthy and sustainable maritime ecosystem. Participants welcomed the recent signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between BIMSTEC and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) as a positive step towards enhanced regional cooperation.

2. To translate this vision into action, participants recommended the development of a comprehensive BIMSTEC Maritime Outlook to foster a shared vision for the Bay of Bengal as a stable, secure, and sustainably governed maritime space. This outlook would foster a common understanding of maritime security, connectivity, blue economy policies, and support HADR actions under a regional framework for BIMSTEC Member States. Participants further underscored the importance of maintaining open channels of communication by establishing regular Naval or Coast Guard platforms for dialogue among BIMSTEC and ASEAN Member States, as well as facilitating collaborative workshops involving BIMSTEC and IORA, in line with the recently signed MOU. Strengthening Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) was highlighted as a priority, with calls to build a robust regional network underpinned by real-time data exchange, enhanced surveillance, and coordination across national and regional centres.

Enhancing Maritime Communications for Effective Crisis Coordination and Disaster Management

3. As climate-accelerated natural hazards continue to pose a threat to the Bay of Bengal region, effective maritime communication has emerged as a critical pillar for disaster preparedness and coordinated crisis response. While national capacities for early warning have improved, the region continues to face challenges related to the interoperability of communication systems, delayed dissemination of alerts, and limited bandwidth for real-time coordination, particularly at sea. Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems (MHEWS), which integrate risk knowledge, technical monitoring, and community response capability, offer a framework to strengthen preparedness.

4. Against this backdrop, participants highlighted that initiatives such as the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Working Group on HADR and the BIMSTEC Guidelines for the Maritime Component of HADR provide promising foundations for regional crisis coordination. The Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), with its existing links to national information centres and its receipt of disaster-related alerts, could serve as a nodal hub for real-time crisis communication across BIMSTEC Member States. Going forward, a coordinated adoption of common SOPs, investment in reliable communication infrastructure, and greater use of artificial intelligence and forecasting technologies could enable more timely and effective maritime crisis responses. Establishing joint

protocols for cross-border disaster coordination will also be key to enhancing trust and readiness among maritime agencies in the Bay of Bengal.

Advancing Regional Cooperation for Sustainable Fisheries and Mitigating Marine Environmental Degradation in the Bay of Bengal

5. Participants acknowledged the progress made through the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO) and the Bay of Bengal Maritime Dialogue, including the establishment of the BIMSTEC-India Marine Research Network (BIMReN). They highlighted key challenges in achieving data-driven, ecosystem-based fisheries management in the Bay of Bengal, including the transboundary nature of fish stocks, fragmented research efforts, limited monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS) systems, and gaps in enforcement against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The need to transition from informal coordination to structured frameworks was emphasised, building on initiatives such as the Bay of Bengal Stock Assessment Network (BOB-SAN) and the recently endorsed Regional Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate IUU Fishing (RPOA-IUU).

6. Participants recommended key actions to advance regional cooperation in sustainable fisheries management. First, it was emphasised that shared resources demand shared responsibility and the transboundary nature of fisheries requires joint stock assessments, coordinated seasonal bans, and cooperative management agreements. Second, to break down research silos through strategic cooperation, participants proposed enhancing collaborative marine research and regional data-sharing through BOB-SAN. Third, participants called for a regional approach to building resilience to climate impacts through stronger institutional linkages and joint operations, such as a “Nansen Plus” model for regional survey vessels. Finally, to combat IUU fishing, participants urged full implementation of the RPOA-IUU and proposed the development of a joint operational framework for regional maritime enforcement. These steps, participants agreed, would not only protect marine biodiversity and food security, but also help future-proof the region’s fisheries against growing climate and geopolitical pressures.

Enhancing Regional Cooperation on Cross-Border Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing

7. Participants highlighted that IUU fishing continues to pose a serious challenge to the sustainability of marine resources and the livelihoods of coastal communities in the Bay of Bengal. The session paid particular attention to the experience of northern Sri Lanka, where artisanal fishers have experienced income losses and declining catches due to continued encroachment by trawlers from Tamil Nadu, despite Sri Lanka’s 2017 ban on bottom trawling. Participants highlighted the profound asymmetry in power between small-scale fishers and industrial operators, as well as between local communities and state-level decision-makers, as a key barrier to resolving the issue. The issue also carries humanitarian and political implications, where unresolved tensions threaten not only marine sustainability but also longstanding cultural and social ties. Concerns were also raised about the inconsistent treatment of detained fishers and the lack of harmonised humanitarian protocols across the region.

8. As an interim measure until issues are resolved through negotiations, participants from Sri Lanka recommended implementing a six-month moratorium on bottom trawling and other destructive fishing practices in the waters covered by the 1974 and 1976 bilateral agreements between India and Sri Lanka (i.e., the Palk Bay, Palk Strait, and the Gulf of Mannar). Such an arrangement would help restore trust, reduce tensions at sea, and offer immediate environmental relief. Alongside this, participants agreed on the need to develop regional humanitarian repatriation protocols to ensure the prompt and dignified treatment of detained fishers across the Bay of Bengal. Broader regional recommendations included establishing a Bay of Bengal Fisheries Management Consortium to coordinate policy and enforcement, as well as initiating joint marine protected areas to support the recovery of fish stocks. Participants also advocated for the collaborative use of enhanced technologies to improve transparency and deterrence. Leveraging international models, such as FISH-i Africa and the EU's Common Fisheries Policy, the Bay of Bengal region could develop a more integrated, ecosystem-based approach to combating IUU fishing and supporting coastal livelihoods.

Advancing Inclusive Policymaking for Maritime Security and Peacemaking

9. Participants highlighted how gender-responsive policymaking can strengthen maritime security and coastal resilience in the Bay of Bengal. Drawing on localised experiences from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, participants underscored the intersectional nature of vulnerability and how gender, ethnicity and class shape individual experiences within coastal communities. For example, in Sri Lanka's north, women were disproportionately affected by post-harvest challenges, while men faced psychosocial stress due to unsustainable loans and shrinking livelihoods. Similar patterns were echoed in Bangladesh, where women form the majority of the fisheries workforce yet remain excluded from key decision-making processes. Participants emphasised that inclusive maritime governance necessitates valuing the distinct knowledge of marginalised ethnic, youth, and Indigenous communities, as well as addressing structural and institutional barriers, including weak gender mandates, a lack of financial literacy, and exclusion from state-centric governance.

10. Participants called for the institutionalisation of gender-disaggregated data collection across fisheries and coastal labour to uncover hidden vulnerabilities and guide policy responses. They recommended participatory consultations with coastal women, youth, Indigenous groups, and fisherfolk cooperatives to ensure that policies are rooted in lived realities. Local ecological knowledge, particularly that held by women, should be integrated into climate resilience and marine resource management strategies. At the regional level, participants suggested embedding gender inclusion as a cross-cutting priority in platforms such as BIMSTEC and IORA. Building regional databases that document gendered impacts of IUU fishing, livelihood stresses, and disaster responses was viewed as a critical enabler for more inclusive and sustainable maritime governance. Participants also highlighted the need for establishing an institutional network or a regional experts' group to guide policymaking in maritime governance and operationalise gender-linked recommendations from the dialogue.

****

List of Participants - Fifth Bay of Bengal Maritime Dialogue

20 – 21 May 2025, Colombo

Bangladesh

Commodore A K M Afzal Hossain
Bangladesh Coast Guard

Ms. Moutusi Islam
Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS)

India

Vice Admiral Anil Kumar Chawla
Former Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief Southern Naval Command and Distinguished Fellow at the United Services Institute and the Council for Strategic and Defense Research

Commodore R.S. Vasan
Director General, Chennai Centre for China Studies and Regional Director, National Maritime Foundation, Tamil Nadu

Captain Anurag Bisen
Senior Fellow, Vivekananda International Foundation

Dr. Sreeradha Datta
Professor, Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University

Prof. Avinash Godbole
Professor and Associate Academic Dean, Jindal School of Liberal Arts and Humanities, O.P. Jindal Global University

Indonesia

Mr. Gilang Kembara
Research Fellow, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore

Myanmar

Commander Zaw Zaw Kyaw
Officer-in-Charge, International Cooperation Division, Operations Department, Myanmar Coast Guard

Commander Chit Ko Ko
Myanmar Navy

Sri Lanka

Hon. Ranil Wickramasinghe
Former President of Sri Lanka

Ms. T. K. S. N. Karunarathnee
Assistant Director (Management), Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources

Captain (C) WWMAB Weerasekara
Director of Operations, Sri Lanka Coast Guard

Ambassador Sumit Nakandala
Former Secretary General, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)

Captain Nirmal Silva
Harbour Master, Sri Lanka Ports Authority

Rear Admiral AAAR Abeysinghe
Ministry of Defence

Dr. Ahilan Kardirgamar
Senior Lecturer, University of Jaffna

Ms. Yathursha Ulakentheran
Research Assistant

Ambassador (Retd.) H.M.G.S. Palihakkara
Former Foreign Secretary of Sri Lanka

Admiral Jayantha Perera
Former Commander, Sri Lanka Navy

Rear Admiral Nishantha Peiris
Former Deputy Chief of Staff & Director General Operations, Sri Lanka Navy

Rear Admiral Y N Jayaratne
Former Chief of Staff & Chief Hydrographer, Sri Lanka Navy

Rear Admiral (Retd.) Dimuthu Gunawardena
Former Director (Communications and Publications) at the Institute of National Security Studies, Sri Lanka

Air Vice Marshal Rajeewa Sampath Wickremeratne
Former Chief of Staff, Sri Lanka Air Force

Thailand

Commander Suriya Yai-on
Head of International Maritime Collaboration Section, Maritime Security Division, Office of Maritime Security Affairs, Naval Operations Department, Royal Thai Navy

Ms. Kasira Jirakornchaiwara
Plan and Policy Analyst, Practitioner Level, Thailand Maritime Enforcement Coordinating Center (Thai-MECC)

Mr. Muhammadmukta Mahni
Plan and Policy Analyst, Professional Level, Office of the National Security Council, Thailand

Regional Organisations and Experts

Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey
Secretary General, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)

Mr. Prasanth Chandran
Director, Security Division, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)

Dr. Pandian Krishnan
Director, Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO)

Dr. Palitha Hikkaduwa
FAO Representative

Ms. Tabea Campbell Pauli
Senior Program Officer, The Asia Foundation

Prof. Peter Haugan
Policy Director, Institute of Marine Research and Professor, Geophysical Institute, University of Bergen

Ms. Janani Vivekananda
Head of Programme, Climate Diplomacy and Security, Adelphi

Pathfinder Foundation

Ambassador (Retd.) Bernard Goonetilleke
Chairman, Pathfinder Foundation

Dr. Dayaratna Silva
Executive Director, Pathfinder Foundation

Ambassador (Retd.) Ahmed A. Jawad
Director, Pathfinder Foundation

Admiral (Prof.) Jayanath Colombage
Distinguished Fellow, Pathfinder Foundation and Former Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy

Mr G. S. Godakanda,
Director – Media, Pathfinder Foundation

Ms. Gayathri De Zoysa
Manager Programmes, Pathfinder Foundation

Ms. Rasanga Kumarihamy
Research Associate, Pathfinder Foundation

Ms. Mariyam Rila
Admin Executive, Pathfinder Foundation

Ms. Rumeka Perera
Programme Executive, Pathfinder Foundation

Mr. Dinushan
Media Executive, Pathfinder Foundation

Mr. Ravi Jayawickrama
Media Executive, Pathfinder Foundation

Ms. Hiruni Ariyarathna
Programme Executive, Pathfinder Foundation

Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD)
Ambassador Venu Rajamony
Senior Adviser for South Asia

Ms. Nilar Oo
Country Representative, Myanmar

Ms. Eve Krassner
Project Officer – Gender-responsive and Inclusive Peacemaking

Mr. Hemant S. Katoch
South Asia Coordinator

Dr. Sreejith Sugunan
Project Lead, South and Southeast Asia

Mr. Nicholas Weng Lam Chu
Project Associate, South and Southeast Asia

Ms. Arisha Parvez
Intern

Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Senior Diplomats based in Colombo

H.E. Mr. Andalib Elias
High Commissioner, High Commission of Bangladesh

H. E. Andrew Patrick
High Commissioner, British High Commission

H.E. Dr. Felix Neumann
Ambassador, Embassy of Germany

Ms. Dharini Daluwatta
Advisor, Embassy of Germany

H.E. Miyon LEE
Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Korea

Ms. Eunji Kang
Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of the Republic of Korea

H. E. Semih Lütfü Turgut
Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye

Mr. Lars Bredal
Deputy Head of Delegation, EU Delegation

Mr. Jin Enze
Third Secretary, Embassy of China

Ms. Kang Jie
Third Secretary, Embassy of China

Mr. Mohammad Tuming
Counsellor, High Commission of Malaysia

Mr. Captain M. Anand
Defence Adviser, High Commission of India

Mr. Manohar Ganesh
Minister (co-ordination), High Commission of India

Mr. Yadi Suriahadi
Counsellor, Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia

Mr. Attila Nasir
Researcher/Advisor, Embassy of Japan

Ms. Wint Wint Khaing Tun
Counsellor, Embassy of Myanmar

Mr. Olivier Praz
Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Switzerland

Mr. Abdul Nazar
Embassy of the United States of Emirates

Mr. Dustin R. Bickel
Regional Indo-Pacific Strategy Coordinator, Embassy of United States of America

Fifth Bay of Bengal Maritime Dialogue
20 - 21 May 2025
Colombo, Sri Lanka

The Bay of Bengal region is one of the most densely populated regions in the world featuring some of the world's fastest growing economies. The region is the meeting point of South and Southeast Asia and was once at the heart of global history. Today, one fourth of the world's traded goods cross through the Bay of Bengal annually and the region possesses rich untapped natural resources. The Bay of Bengal is increasingly becoming a theatre of geopolitical interests and tension given its great economic potential and faces a variety of maritime security challenges. Considering the increasing geopolitical interests and the cross-border nature of maritime security challenges, there is a clear incentive and scope for further regional cooperation.

To foster meaningful discussion on maritime affairs in the Bay of Bengal and unlock opportunities for deeper regional cooperation, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and the Pathfinder Foundation co-host the annual Bay of Bengal Maritime Dialogue. The previous four editions of the Dialogue (2021-2024) laid the groundwork for policy recommendations across a range of issues including discussions around crisis communication and Guiding Principles for Maritime Law Enforcement Agencies (MLEAs) in the Bay of Bengal, as well as the establishment of the BIMSTEC-India Marine Research Network (BIMReN).

The Fifth Bay of Bengal Maritime Dialogue aims to identify new avenues for cooperation while minimising potential bottlenecks for constructive engagement among the littoral states. With the growing prominence of BIMSTEC in regional affairs, the dialogue seeks to amplify regional collaboration by deepening engagement with key regional organisations. Main priorities include driving robust regional maritime governance; strengthening maritime communications and crisis management; advancing joint marine research in the Bay of Bengal; and enhancing regional efforts to combat cross-border illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Furthermore, the dialogue seeks to promote inclusive policymaking in regional maritime governance. The outcomes of the dialogue will be made available to the BIMSTEC Secretariat as well as its Member States.

Panel discussions during the Bay of Bengal Maritime Dialogue adhere to Chatham House Rules.

AGENDA

ARRIVAL Monday 19 May 2025	
	Arrival in Colombo *Cinnamon Grand Hotel, Colombo*
19:00	**Welcome Dinner** *The Atrium Lobby, Cinnamon Grand Hotel*

DAY 1 Tuesday 20 May 2025	
09:15 – 09:30	**Arrival of Guests** *Oak Room, Cinnamon Grand Hotel*
09:30 – 09:40	**Welcome & Opening Remarks** ➢ Amb. Bernard Goonetilleke, Chairman of the Pathfinder Foundation ➢ Amb. Venu Rajamony, Senior Adviser for South Asia, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
09:40 – 09:55	**Address by Chief Guest** ➢ H. E. Ranil Wickremesinghe, Former President of Sri Lanka
09:55 – 10:10	**Plenary Address** ➢ Amb. Indra Mani Pandey, Secretary General, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)
10:10 – 10:25	**Keynote Address** ➢ Prof. Peter Haugan, Policy Director, Institute of Marine Research and Professor, Geophysical Institute, University of Bergen
10:25 – 10:45	**Group Photograph and Coffee Break**
Session 1: Driving Regional Cooperation for Robust Maritime Governance	
10:45 – 12:10	This session will address maritime governance challenges in the Bay of Bengal by exploring strategies for norm-building, regional policy alignment, and capacity-building to enhance sustainable maritime security governance. **Guiding Questions** ➢ *What are the priority areas linked to maritime governance where regional cooperation can yield significant positive impact in improving the region?* ➢ *What measures need to be taken to effectively advance norm-building and policy alignment among Bay of Bengal littoral states in these priority areas?* ➢ *What capacity building initiatives are needed to enhance sustainable maritime security governance in littoral states?* ➢ *What can the littoral states and the BIMSTEC learn from the successes or failures of regional cooperation institutions or organisations within or beyond the region?*

	Moderator ➢ Amb. Venu Rajamony, Senior Adviser for South Asia, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue **Vision Speaker** ➢ Gilang Kembara, Research Fellow, Maritime Security Programme, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies **Distinguished Contributors** ➢ Amb. Indra Mani Pandey, Secretary General, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) ➢ Amb. Sumith Nakandala, Former Secretary General, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) ➢ Capt. Anurag Bisen, Senior Fellow, Vivekananda International Foundation ➢ Moutusi Islam, Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS)
Session 2: Enhancing Maritime Communications for Effective Crisis Coordination and Disaster Management	
12:10 – 13:40	The session will explore enhancing maritime communications for effective crisis coordination and disaster management in the Bay of Bengal, focusing on interoperability, technology integration, and lessons from past operations to improve regional disaster preparedness and response. **Guiding Questions** ➢ *Considering the unique vulnerabilities of the region, what are the most significant communication challenges that impact effective crisis management and response?* ➢ *What concrete mechanisms can littoral states and regional bodies establish for improved coordination and information sharing for regional maritime crisis and disaster management?* ➢ *What are the best ways for Bay of Bengal countries to share information to enhance maritime security and crisis prevention?* ➢ *Beyond traditional methods, what innovative technologies and platforms can be leveraged to improve maritime crisis communication in Bay of Bengal?* **Moderator** ➢ Amb. Ahmed A. Jawad, Director, Pathfinder Foundation **Vision Speaker** ➢ Vice Admiral Anil Kumar Chawla, Former Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief Southern Naval Command and Distinguished Fellow at the United Services Institute and the Council for Strategic and Defense Research **Distinguished Contributors** ➢ Commodore A K M Afzal Hossain, Bangladesh Coast Guard ➢ Commander Chit Ko Ko, Myanmar Navy ➢ Captain Ashoka Weerasekara, Director of Operations, Sri Lanka Coast Guard ➢ Prasanth Chandran, Director, Security Division, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)
13:40 – 14:40	Lunch *Oak Room, Cinnamon Grand Hotel*

Session 3: Advancing Regional Cooperation for Sustainable Fisheries and Mitigating Marine Environmental Degradation in the Bay of Bengal	
14:40 – 16:00	This session will explore the policy gaps and regional needs for mitigating marine environmental degradation and developing sustainable fisheries management in the Bay of Bengal, focusing on cross-border cooperation, data sharing, strengthening regional capacity building etc. **Guiding Questions** ➢ *What are the most critical knowledge gaps hindering sustainable fisheries management in the region that can be addressed through joint efforts of the littoral states?* ➢ *How can Bay of Bengal countries strengthen cross-border data sharing and scientific collaboration to support sustainable fisheries in the face of depleting fish stocks and increasing marine environmental degradation?* ➢ *In what ways can regional bodies support and facilitate sustainable fisheries management and marine environmental protection among the Bay of Bengal countries?* ➢ *What measures can be taken to strengthen regional capacity building in these areas?* **Moderator** ➢ Dr. Sreejith Sugunan, Project Lead – South Asia, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue **Vision Speaker** ➢ Dr. Pandian Krishnan, Director, Bay of Bengal Programme – Intergovernmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO) **Distinguished Contributors** ➢ Prof. Peter Haugan, Policy Director, Institute of Marine Research and Professor, Geophysical Institute, University of Bergen ➢ Ms. T. K. S. N. Karunarathnee, Assistant Director (Management), Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources ➢ Dr. Avinash Godbole, Professor and Associate Academic Dean, Jindal School of Liberal Arts and Humanities, O.P. Jindal Global University
Day 1 Conclusion	
16:00 – 16:10	**Concluding Remarks from Day 1** ➢ Amb. Venu Rajamony, Senior Adviser for South Asia, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue ➢ Amb. Bernard Goonetilleke, Chairman, Pathfinder Foundation

DAY 2 Wednesday 21 May 2025	
09:30 – 09:45	**Arrival of Guests** *Oak Room, Cinnamon Grand Hotel*
Session 4: Enhancing Regional Cooperation on Cross-Border Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing	
09:45 – 11:15	The session will address cross-border IUU fishing in the Bay of Bengal, focusing on regional collaboration around the following key areas: maritime law enforcement actions, humanitarian treatment of fishers and collaborative marine ecosystem protection. **Guiding Questions** ➢ *What successful international models of regional cooperation against IUU fishing and marine ecosystem protection can the Bay of Bengal region adapt or replicate?* ➢ *What innovative technologies or approaches can support regional monitoring and deterrence of IUU fishing activities?* ➢ *Are existing enforcement measures adequate and effective to prevent IUU fishing? Do these measures ensure humanitarian treatment of fishers arrested for cross-border fishing?* ➢ *How can regional collaboration on IUU fishing contribute to long-term marine ecosystem health and the sustainability of fish stocks?* **Moderator** ➢ Amb. H.M.G.S. Palihakkara, Former Foreign Secretary of Sri Lanka **Vision Speaker** ➢ Dr. Ahilan Kadirgamar, Senior Lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of Jaffna **Distinguished Contributors:** ➢ Commodore R.S. Vasan, Director General, Chennai Centre for China Studies and Regional Director of National Maritime Foundation, Tamil Nadu ➢ Admiral (Prof.) Jayanath Colombage, Distinguished Fellow, Pathfinder Foundation and Former Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy ➢ Commander Zaw Zaw Kyaw, Officer-in-Charge, International Cooperation Division, Operations Department, Myanmar Coast Guard
11:15 – 11:30	Coffee Break
Session 5: Advancing Inclusive Policymaking for Maritime Security and Peacemaking	
11:30 – 13:00	This session will examine how gender-responsive policymaking can strengthen maritime governance in the Bay of Bengal, with a focus on illegal fishing, disaster response, and coastal resilience. Drawing on diverse perspectives from research, diplomacy and field engagement, participants will explore what an inclusive resource-sharing framework between India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh could look like, and what is needed to ensure such a framework is politically viable, locally grounded, and regionally coherent.

	Guiding Questions ➢ *What are the structural and institutional barriers to gender-responsive policy in the Bay of Bengal region?* ➢ *How can gender-disaggregated data, participatory consultations and local knowledge be better integrated into maritime security and peacemaking policies?* ➢ *What does effective and meaningful participation of women and marginalised communities in maritime policymaking look like at the local, national and regional levels?* ➢ *Are there successful regional or global models for inclusive maritime governance that the littoral states can adapt?* **Moderator** ➢ Eve Krassner, Project Officer – Gender-responsive and Inclusive Peacemaking, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue **Distinguished Speakers** ➢ Janani Vivekananda, Head of Programme, Climate Diplomacy and Security, Adelphi ➢ Dr. Sreeradha Datta, Professor, Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University ➢ Moutusi Islam, Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) ➢ Rasanga Kumarihamy, Research Associate, Pathfinder Foundation
Day 2 Conclusion	
13:00 – 13:15	**Concluding Remarks from Day 2 and Way Forward** ➢ Dr. Sreejith Sugunan, Project Lead – South Asia, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue ➢ Amb. Ahmed A. Jawad, Director, Pathfinder Foundation
13:15	Lunch *Oak Room, Cinnamon Grand Hotel*

Pathfinder Foundation is a premier think tank that has played a catalytic role in research and analysis aimed at contributing to economic policy reforms in Sri Lanka. Over the years, it has established a wide network of partner organizations worldwide, thereby enhancing bilateral and multilateral partnerships to promote economic, social and political development, in addition to its security and strategic focus. Serving as a platform to engage in critical thinking and cross-disciplinary analysis, Pathfinder Foundation aims to increase knowledge and raise awareness of salient issues with relevant stakeholders locally and internationally.

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) is a Swiss-based private diplomacy organisation founded on the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. HD's mission is to help prevent, mitigate, and resolve armed conflict through dialogue and mediation. HD uses the tools of private diplomacy to expand the space for the non-violent resolution of armed conflict. It opens channels of communication and mediates between parties in conflict, facilitates dialogue, provides support to the broader mediation and peacebuilding community, carries out capacity building work, and conducts research on mediation issues. HD deploys its expertise to support local processes that protect civilians and foster lasting and just peace.