

The 69th Session of the UNGA

Address

by

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Hon'ble Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

The United Nations

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Mr. President,

Assalamu Alaikum and Good Morning to you all.

I congratulate you warmly on your election as the President of the 69th session of the General Assembly. My commendations go to Ambassador John Ashe for his leadership of the 68th UNGA. My appreciation also goes to Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for his stewardship towards realizing our common vision for a world of peace, dignity, and well-being for all.

Mr. President,

Four decades back, in his maiden speech at the UN General Assembly, our Father of the Nation, *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, espoused his vision for a global order. He said “The Bengali nation is pledge-bound to establish a global order based on peaceful co-existence, social justice and freedom from poverty, hunger, exploitation and aggression”. That vision continues to guide Bangladesh’s national development pursuits and our engagement in the global affairs.

We gather at a time when the global development discourse is at an important juncture. As the implementation of MDGs approaches its deadline, the global community is engaged on framing a transformative development agenda for 2016-2030.

The theme for the UNGA session is, therefore, timely. Bangladesh believes that our deliberations would help us arrive at a balanced, pragmatic and ambitious agenda.

Mr. President,

We cannot achieve sustainable development in the absence of durable peace and security. The volatile global security situation continues to pose significant challenge to international development.

Bangladesh believes that threat to peace anywhere is a threat for the entire humanity. In conformity with our principled position, we continue to express our full solidarity with the Palestinian people in their legitimate struggle for self-determination.

We condemn the systematic killing of hundreds of Palestinian civilians, including women and children, by Israel during the recent offensive in Gaza. We seek a permanent solution to this longstanding conflict through the creation of an independent and viable state of Palestine, based on the pre-1967 borders and with Al Quds Al Sharif as its capital.

Bangladesh strongly believes in the centrality and legitimacy of the UN as the custodian of global peace, security and development. Our commitment to international peace is manifest through our flagship UNGA Resolution on a **‘Culture of Peace and Non-violence’**.

Our peace leadership is further reaffirmed through our support to the UN as a top troops and police contributing country in its **peacekeeping** endeavours.

We have so far contributed 128,133 peacekeepers in 54 peace Missions. Bangladesh proudly contributes the highest number of women police to UN peacekeeping commensurate with our women empowerment credentials.

Mr. President,

Terrorism and extremism remain major impediments to global peace and development. My Government maintains a 'zero-tolerance' policy to all forms of terrorism, violent extremism, radicalization and religion-based politics. We remain firm in our resolve not to allow any terrorist individual or entity to use our territory against any state.

The **anti-liberation** forces continue to remain active in destroying the progressive and secular fabric of our nation. They resort to **religious militancy and violent extremism in every opportunity**. Under the direct patronage of the BNP-Jamaat Alliance Government from 2001 to 2006, they coalesced to form terrorist outfits, that perpetrated bomb and grenade attacks killing secular political leaders and activists.

These gruesome attacks cemented my resolve to create a strong legal and regulatory regime for countering terrorism including adoption of amended **Anti-Terrorism Act 2013 and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2012**.

My Government is also entrenching democracy, secularism and women empowerment to ideologically defeat terrorism and extremism. We have also significantly enhanced transparency and accountability in governance by strengthening our Election, Anti-Corruption, Human Rights and Information Commissions.

To uphold peace and 'rule of law' and end a '**culture of impunity**', my government remains pledge-bound to bring to justice the culprits of war crimes, crimes against humanity, rape, and genocide committed during our 1971 Liberation War.

The highly transparent, impartial and independent International Crimes Tribunals, Bangladesh, have already completed trials of a few

key criminals who perpetrated heinous crimes against humanity. We look towards international community's full appreciation of the aspirations of our people for this long-awaited justice.

Mr. President,

Our government has integrated the **Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs) into our national five-year plans and into our 'Vision 2021'. Our people-centric Vision aspires to transform Bangladesh into a knowledge-based, technology-driven Middle Income Country by 2021.

Bangladesh has already met or, is on track to meet MDG-1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. Poverty has been reduced from 57% in 1991 to below 25% today.

During the last five years, the average GDP growth remained 6.2% despite global recession; export earnings grew by more than 3 times from around US\$10.53 billion in 2006 to over US\$ 30.5 billion last fiscal; remittance flow also increased nearly three times from US\$ 5 billion in 2006 to US\$ 14.5 billion; foreign currency reserve jumped by 6.5-fold from US\$ 3.49 billion in 2006 to US \$ 22 billion at present.

In order to unlock Bangladesh's development potentials, we have undertaken some massive **infrastructure and connectivity projects**. We have initiated work on building a 6.15 km bridge over the mighty river Padma with our own resources.

Development of a Deep Sea Port in Sonadia, Chittagong is in the offing. Upgrading our road and rail infrastructures, including expressways and river tunnels, is underway.

We have reached agreements with friendly countries such as India, China and Japan to develop large scale power plants to meet our growing demands by 2021.

Eighteen **Economic Zones (EZs)** are being developed across the country to allow potential investors to invest in Bangladesh especially in the context of our growing integration into the regional connectivity framework.

Bangladesh enjoys a clear **demographic dividend** with two thirds young employable workforce to remain economically active till 2031. It is a policy imperative for us to invest in **skill development** of our increasingly younger population.

With a view to developing a knowledge-based society, we are rapidly building the country's and its people's capabilities towards contemporary ICTs. Today, people receive over 200 services from over 4,500 Union Services and Information Centers. Rural people get access to health care services from over 15,000 IT-connected **Community Health Clinics** and Union Health Centers.

These networks allow us reach various crucial public services to the doorstep of our people most affordably. Bangladesh has 117 million SIMs with more than 78% tele-penetration and 50 million internet connections.

Bangladesh's strides in education have enabled us to reach the MDG targets of ensuring universal primary school enrolment and gender parity in primary and secondary schools. Our Government is providing students with free education up to 12th Grade.

We are offering monthly stipend to 12.8 million girls and boys students of poor families from primary to graduation level. Seventy five percent of them are girls. We are distributing around 318 million free textbooks to all students up to the secondary level each year.

We are now focused on improving the quality of education to enable our boys and girls to acquire necessary life skills and grow up with a truly global outlook.

For us, sustainable development entails empowerment of women and their equal participation with men, in all walks of life. Our efforts to promote women's empowerment by enhancing their access to productive resources and representation in national and local levels are producing visible results.

Pragmatic policies of the government have helped women leadership grow from the grassroots to the top-most levels. Bangladesh is possibly the only country today where women simultaneously hold high positions of Prime Minister, Speaker, Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader. 10% of posts for women are reserved in judicial, administrative, civil service and in the armed forces and law enforcing agencies. 60% of posts of primary school teachers are reserved for women.

With a view to ensuring equality, my government is running numerous social safety net programs that cover more than 24% of our population.

Notable among those are, Vulnerable Group Feeding and Development; "*Ashrayan*", housing and livelihood for the homeless; monthly pension for senior citizens, widows, destitute women, disabled,

maternity allowance and food and nutrition security to rural people through "*One House, One Farm*" schemes to promote family farming.

Persons with other disabilities are provided with education, skill development and interest-free credit for self-employment. In the formal sector, one percent quota has been reserved for them.

Mr. President,

The MDGs have been the most successful global anti-poverty push in history. It is due to MDGs that the world witnesses 50 percent less poverty than it did in 1990, more girls in school, lesser number of children dying and more people having access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

However, the progress has been uneven and unequal within and among countries and regions. Sadly, over 1.3 billion people still live in abject poverty.

As we reflect on the new and emerging developmental challenges, eradication of poverty must remain at the center of the Post-2015 Agenda; and build linkages with all other Goals.

The new framework must secure a balance of the three pillars of sustainable development, particularly being mindful of the need for access, unique circumstances and diverse needs of countries like Bangladesh.

I am pleased that the Open-ended Working Group in the UN has recommended a set of inter-linked Goals and Targets through a rigorous, widely inclusive process.

In Bangladesh, we had wider national consultations and remained intensely engaged in the global process. We consider the set of Goals

and Targets a carefully-balanced package and crucial basis for the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

The future Development Agenda must meaningfully address the long-standing resource and capacity constraints of the low-income developing countries and respond to the emerging risks and vulnerabilities.

The Post-2015 development framework must fulfill our aspirations of building an equitable, prosperous and sustainable world where no person or nation is left behind. It must also contribute to a strengthened multilateralism, go beyond national policy space and forge international collaboration.

Greater resources would be key to the success of the Post-2015 Agenda. There is a need for a robust and broad-based **global partnership**, based on the principles of mutual trust and respect, common but differentiated responsibility.

Bangladesh would particularly stress on a clear resolve on financing of sustainable development by next year, particularly from the Financing for Development process.

While it is encouraging that some of the developed countries have fulfilled their commitment of contributing 0.7% of their GNI and 0.2% of GNI as ODA to the LDCs, most others still remain to fulfill those.

At the same time, in a globalized economy the least developed and climate-vulnerable countries like Bangladesh require greater support in respect of ODA, science-technology-innovation and capacity-building. All products from all LDCs must be granted duty-free and quota-free access to all developed country markets.

Mr. President,

The world today is witnessing unprecedented **human mobility**, within and beyond borders. Bangladesh has emerged as a key stakeholder in global migration.

For instance, remittance contributes to around 14% to our GDP. Millions of our migrant workers continue to make significant contribution to the development in a range of countries worldwide.

We need to acknowledge manifold contribution that migrants and their families make to our economies and societies apart from mere remittance.

It is, therefore, logical for migration and development to find deserving space across the emerging Post-2015 framework. I would be happy to announce that Bangladesh would be chairing the ninth Global Forum on Migration and Development in 2016.

Mr. President,

No challenge is as complex, widespread and formidable as **climate change** to countries like ours. A recent Asian Development Bank report estimated the mean economic cost of climate change and adaptation for Bangladesh to be between 2% and 9% of GDP by 2100.

Earlier, I had underlined before the Assembly, that one degree Celsius increase in temperature is estimated to a meter rise of the sea-level, submerging a fifth of Bangladesh. That might force thirty million of our people to move elsewhere as "climate migrants". For Bangladesh, climate change is a matter of bare existence.

In addressing climate change, adaptation remains particularly key for us. We have a crucial need for adequate, predictable and additional

climate finance; access to locally-adaptable technologies; and support to capacity and institution-building.

We reiterate with UN leadership, particularly through the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that integration of UNFCCC, the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and SDGs processes is important.

The world also needs to recognise untapped potential of ocean-based **Blue Economy**. The coastal and small island developing states stand to benefit much through balanced conservation, development and utilization of marine eco-systems, resources and services.

We call for global support to coastal countries like Bangladesh in developing much-needed capacity, technology, institutional frameworks for us to tap into 'Blue opportunities'. We thus continue to support incorporation of Blue Economy principles and practices in the Post-2015 framework.

Mr. President,

Bangladesh proposed flagship resolution at the UNESCO, secured in 1999 recognition of “**21 February** as the ‘International Mother Language Day’” for the peoples of the world.

We established the only ‘International Mother Language Institute’ in Dhaka to preserve more than 6500 mother-tongues of humanity. These are two pillars of our commitment to mother language.

I once again call upon this august assembly to recognize Bangla, spoken by more than 300 million people, as an official language of the UN.

Mr. President,

This year Bangladesh celebrates forty years of its membership in the UN. On this special occasion, I reaffirm on behalf of our people, what our Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman appealed for our progeny to this august Assembly in 1974: “Let us together create a world that can eradicate poverty, hunger, war and human sufferings and achieve global peace and security for the well being of humanity'.”

I thank you, Mr. President.

Khoda Hafez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.
Long Live the United Nations.