



The 67th Session of the UNGA

Address

by

Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina

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 Afternoon to you all.

1. I warmly congratulate you on your election as President of the 67th Session of the General Assembly. I thank Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for his excellent leadership as the President of the 66th UNGA. I also thank Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for his initiatives covering the achievements of the UN in the past year.

Mr. President,

2. Our new world is experiencing people's uprising, intra-state conflicts, climate change disasters, global financial crises, food and energy insecurity, human rights violations, terrorism, etc. These and others call for collective efforts to peaceful resolution in the floor of the United Nations. I, therefore, commend "settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means" as the theme for this year's deliberations.

3. Here, I recall the role of my father, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of the Nation, who at this podium 38 years ago declared, "Friendship towards all, malice towards none", "peaceful settlement of all disputes", "renouncement of the use of force in international relations" and "contribution to global peace and security". In essence, his policy at home and abroad was based on justice and peace. These policy guidelines inspired me to settle at home the 20 year old conflict costing over 20,000 lives, through the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord in 1997 during my last tenure as Prime Minister. In my present tenure, I could peacefully settle the volatile Border Guards Mutiny in February 2009, thus averting a dangerous crisis.

4. As for our external relations, I resolved the 25 year old issue with India on water sharing of River Ganges through the 30 Year Ganges Water Sharing Treaty in 1996 and the 64 year old border demarcation issue covered by the 2011 Protocol to the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement. We also addressed mutual concerns over a dam proposed by India across a common river. With Myanmar, our other neighbor, we have peacefully settled the 41 year old Maritime Boundary dispute at ITLOS.

5. Our international commitment to peace has also been demonstrated by our position as one of the top contributors to UN peacekeeping, and as a founder member of UN Peace Building Commission. As current Chair of the Commission, we held an event entitled, "Peace Building: A way forward towards sustainable Peace and Security" on 25th September last in which many of you participated. As member of Human Rights Council and the ECOSOC, we promote justice, peace, democracy, gender equality, secularism, rule of law, rights of minorities and of vulnerable groups. As Executive member of UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, UNESCO, FAO, IMO and the UPU, we advocate setting of the global norms and standards.

6. In my four decades of politics for the welfare of the people, I have learned that peace prevails when justice prevails, within the states, as well as in state to state relations. Only justice ensures peace, vital for development, and justice is possible only through democracy, which empowers people. The alternate absence of democracy means social injustice, poverty, inequality, deprivation and marginalization,

encouraging extremism and terrorism. We are, therefore, strengthening democracy and justice by empowering people through eradicating poverty, hunger, inequality, and deprivation with social safety nets; job creation; inclusiveness, sustained growth and human development; and through countering terrorism.

7. The above principles also encouraged me to present the model, "People's Empowerment and Development" at the 66th UNGA. The model contains six mutually reinforcing peace multipliers, that is, (1) Eradication of poverty and hunger; (2) Reduction of inequality; (3) Mitigation of deprivation; (4) Inclusion of excluded people; (5) Acceleration of human development; and (6) Elimination of terrorism. It was endorsed by UNGA resolution 66/224 and adopted by consensus last year. In Dhaka, on 5-6 August 2012, we held an international conference to discuss the model and received support of the 62 participating countries for its consideration in the 67th UNGA. I highly appreciate their support. I also seek your support for propagation of this model.

8. In our efforts to achieve people's empowerment, the Parliamentary Standing Committees was formed in the first session of the Parliament constituted immediately after the general elections of 2008. The number of the committees stands at 50. The chairmen of some of the committees are the MPs from the opposition bench. We also introduced weekly Prime Minister's "Question and Answer"; strengthened Commissions on Anti-Corruption, Human Rights, Information; ensured an independent, proactive judiciary; strengthened rule of law; established human rights, accountability, secularism, rights of minorities; proceeded with regional multi-modal connectivity to empower all people; modernized education of Madrassahs; entrenched the Election Commission and democratic institutions for holding of 5,182 elections in a completely free and credible atmosphere; freed and expanded media with 24 private TV channels, 7 news agencies, 11 FM and 14 Community stations, 320 dailies and 151 periodicals, etc.

9. Since justice is the basis for empowering people for peace and development, women should have an equal role. To expedite the process of their

empowerment, girls are provided free education up to higher secondary school under our new Education Policy. Women are also encouraged to be active in our national life. Women leadership has been developed from grass root level to national level. Their participation in politics has been increased since 2008 general elections. 12,838 women have so far been elected in the local government bodies. 69 women are the members of the Parliament constituting 20% of the total number of MPs. Besides me as the Prime Minister and the Leader of the House, the Opposition Leader, the Deputy Leader of the House, five cabinet ministers and a Whip are women. 30% of the general government posts are reserved for women, some of whom serve in very senior positions in the judicial, administrative, diplomatic fields, as well as in the armed and law enforcement services, and as UN peacekeepers.

10. Our efforts at empowering people in our present tenure, have so far helped in reducing poverty by 10%; attaining GDP growth rate of 6.5%; enhancing per capita income by 34.6%; reducing overall inflation from double digits to 4.97% with food inflation from 13% in 2008

to presently 2.25%; assisting employment of 7.5 million in the private and 0.5 million in the public sectors; increasing exports annually by 19% from 2009 to US \$24.3 billion in 2011-2012; arranging overseas job for 1.87 million nationals; increasing annual inward remittance by 10% in 2009 to US\$ 12 billion in 2011-2012; maintaining macro-economic stability; expanding ICT facilities among the lowest tier of the local government to ensure the availability of e-services to the rural people; enrolling almost 100% children in primary schools; achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education; establishing 12,000 community clinics to ensure nutrition and healthcare to rural people, especially mother and child; setting up a Climate Change Trust Fund to implement adaptation and mitigation programs. These have all helped achieving MDG-3, MDG-4 and MDG-5 on gender parity, infant and maternal mortality, ahead of 2015.

11. Our achievements have earned us global recognition with MDGs, South-South, and FAO awards. Importantly, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has acknowledged these achievements by including me as a member of the Lead Group for Scaling up the Nutrition Movement, and as a

champion for "Education First Initiative." We also welcome his High Level Panel on Post-MDGs Development Agenda, which should include coherence with the SDGs and should prioritize poverty, hunger, nutrition, global food and energy security, climate change, and global partnership for sustainable development.

12. I hope the High Level Panel would also consider formulating a position on the painful plight of the autistic and disadvantaged children comprising 1% of the world's population. At home, we have put in place 55 special needs of the schools and a Center for Neurodevelopment and Autism in Children. In July 2011, with the collaboration of WHO and "Autism Speaks", we launched a Global Autism Public Health Initiative. In the present UNGA session, we will table a resolution on "Autism Spectrum Disorder" which I hope will receive your support for adoption.

13. Our efforts are hindered by the unjust climate change developments like increasing poverty, property loss, human displacements, and consequent terrorism. The inevitable sea level rise would create mass movements of displaced migrants. A new legal regime ensuring social, cultural, and economic rehabilitation of climate

migrants that I called for in the 64th UNGA must be put in place. It was also emphasized at the Dhaka meeting in 2011 of the Climate Vulnerable Forum that an alliance of countries most vulnerable to climate change and sea rising has to be forged. Bangladesh held the 2nd Edition of the Climate Vulnerability Monitor yesterday in New York. I also reiterate my call for an international agreement limiting greenhouse gas emissions, on the principle of common and differentiated responsibilities; on early operation of the "Green Climate Fund" for adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer, etc.

14. Closely linked to climate change is global food and energy security. Increase of food and energy prices due to climate change can be very disturbing indeed. It has dangerous implications to LDCs, which is why they need greater international support for socio-economic security for which duty free and quota free market access of their products to all markets, fulfillment of ODA commitments, equal voice in Bretton Woods Institutions and IFIs, and free movement of labor to all countries is important. In fact, we should immediately implement Mode IV of the GATS to benefit both sending and receiving countries.

We should also ensure documentation and safe migration, and protection of the rights of migrant workers, especially women and children, as a shared responsibility of sending and receiving states in the WTO.

Mr. President,

15. The blatant injustice, murder, torture and humiliation of the Palestinian people by Israel are a shameful chapter in human history. Deep frustrations at the injustice in Palestine and in other places are also the cause of terrorism. It is vital to resolve the Palestine and other similar burning issues through justice and establishment of democratic rights.

16. In Bangladesh, from 2001 to 2006, there prevailed an environment of terrorism. Under the patronage of the previous BNP-Jammat Government, internationally banned terrorist outfits as Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Harkatul Jihad, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Lashkar-e-Taiba, among others, carried out bomb and grenade attacks with impunity on every other day to eliminate the secular and progressive parties. Prominent instances were the bomb attacks on four cinema

halls killing 19 people on 5th December 2002; grenade attack on the British High Commissioner on 21st May 2004; bomb blasts at 500 places in 63 out of 64 districts within a span of half an hour on 17th August 2005; grenade and firearm attacks killing former Finance Minister and Executive Director of ESCAP Mr. SAMS Kibria MP, Mr. Ahsanullah Master MP, Mr. Mumtazuddin MP, and two popular judges inside the court premises.

17. I was myself a target of a grenade attack at a public meeting on 21 August 2004 that left 24 people dead and nearly 500 injured. Somehow, I had miraculously survived. Another heinous kind of terrorism that we experienced in Bangladesh was the brutal assassination of my father and the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and 18 members of our family on 15 August 1975 by some misguided army personnel for usurping state power. At that time, I was abroad with my sister, Sheikh Rehana, and thus escaped death. In view of our nation's tragic experiences with terrorism, my government had adopted a firm policy of "Zero Tolerance" to terrorism, and all forms of extremism.

Mr. President,

18. I conclude by joining the vast majority of the UN members in reemphasizing the urgent need to reform the United Nations, the Bretton Woods Institutions and other IFIs. Their structure and decision making process reflect the 60 year old power equations, serving the interests of a privileged few and ignoring the large majority. The new millennium with its large number of independent, sovereign states and globalization has ushered in a changed world order. Today, we talk boldly of justice, equality, democracy, freedom, human rights, environment, and climate change adverse impacts, among others. They are the priorities of our time which we must acknowledge in place of the hangovers of the past. The new world order of nations has to be based on justice, mutual respect and sovereign equality to evolve a world of peace and hope that we wish to leave for our future generations.

I thank you, Mr. President.

Khoda Hafez.

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

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