



The 71st Session of the UNGA

Address

by

H. E. Sheikh Hasina

Hon'ble Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

General Assembly Hall, UNHQ
1930 hrs on 21 September 2016

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Mr. President,

Assalamu Alaikum and a very good afternoon to you all.

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you on your election as President of the 71st session of the General Assembly.

I commend the exemplary manner your predecessor Mr. Mogens Lykketoft presided over the Assembly last year.

Mr. President,

UN Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon marks the completion of his tenure this year. I recall our many meetings and conversations on host of issues of importance. Always a true and trusted friend, he recognized Bangladesh's development gains as 'role model' for the rest of the world. I wish him and Madame Ban continued success and good health.

Mr. President,

Our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had stated in this august Assembly in 1974, (and I quote): "Our total commitment to peace is born of the realization that only an environment of peace would enable us to ... mobilize and concentrate all our energies and resources in combating the scourges of poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy and unemployment".

Our world is now at a juncture, when we have the end of these scourges in sight. There are many creative and practical solutions in our hands. The amazing power of technology, ideas and global citizens make us imagine a 'brave new world'.

Yet, our world is not free from tension and fear. Violent conflicts continue to rage in several places, with heavy toll of human lives. Those fleeing from conflicts are often denied protection across borders. Dire humanitarian needs are at times ignored or access blocked. What crime Aylan Kurdi, the 3-year innocent child of Syria who drowned in the sea, had committed? What was the fault of 5-year old Omran, who was seriously wounded by airstrike at his own home in Aleppo? It is indeed hard to bear all these cruelties as a mother. Won't these happenings stir the world conscience?

We have just concluded a historic Summit on migrants and refugees. The outcome of the Summit should help redefine perceptions and realities of human mobility in our time. Migrants and refugees must be seen as potential change agents in both their places of origin and destination. Bangladesh offers to co-facilitate the work on the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. We look forward to a constructive dialogue on all related issues at the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) that we are hosting in December this year.

Mr. President,

In 2015, we adopted a transformative development agenda with a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The political will behind the agenda needs to be translated into concrete and meaningful support for countries that are lagging behind. In order to catch up, the developing world needs access to transformative technologies. The internationally agreed development commitments for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) must be fulfilled to pave the way for their graduation. The Technology Bank for LDCs should be geared at promoting innovation and predictable resource flow.

In Bangladesh, we have already mainstreamed most SDGs into our national development plans. A platform under the supervision of Prime Minister has been created to coordinate and monitor the work. Consultations are ongoing with the local governments, civil society, media and academia.

These are in tandem with our "Vision-2021" and "Vision-2041" towards realizing our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's dream of building a hunger-, poverty, illiteracy- and exploitation-free "Sonar Bangladesh" – the Golden Bangladesh.

Mr. President,

Our aim is to build an inclusive, empowered, digital and knowledge-based society. My Government is focusing on innovative public service delivery, mass access to information, and enhanced transparency and accountability.

We have set up about 10,000 digital centres across the country in order to cater 200 different services to our people's doorsteps. Health services through mobile phones and a 24-hour web-portal are complementing the work of 16,438 community and local health clinics. Digital Laboratories and Multi-media classrooms are operating in growing number of educational institutions.

Mr. President,

The growing web of physical and virtual connectivity is creating new opportunities for our peoples. As a key enabler of economic development, broadband connectivity should reach to every citizen of the world. I invite world leaders and other international partners to join hands in making these possible. Our Government is committed to provide voice and data connection to every citizen by 2021.

Mr. President,

Bangladesh's strategic location makes it an emerging hub for regional connectivity, foreign investments and global outsourcing. We have embarked on large-scale infrastructure projects to match our development aspirations. Multi-modal transport networks are being built to promote trade and people-to-people contacts among Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN).

The work of the 6.15 km long Padma Multi-Purpose Bridge has been commissioned with our own resources. Discussions are underway to build a deep seaport, while our third seaport in Paira has commenced operations. Work on the metro rail in capital Dhaka city is also underway.

One hundred Economic Zones (EZs) are being developed across the country to allow potential investors to invest in Bangladesh.

Mr. President,

Such forward-looking thrust in our progress is supported by impressive performance of our macro- and socio-economic indicators. In 2015-16 fiscal year, our economy posted a GDP growth rate higher than 7%.

Bangladesh has experienced one of the fastest poverty reduction rates in the world with a modest resource base. We have brought down poverty from 56.7% in 1991 to 22.4% today. We have already graduated from the UNDP's low human development category to medium, and also the World Bank's lower-middle income status. Despite global recession, our export earnings grew by more than 3 times to USD 34.24 billion; remittance flow increased nearly 3 times; and, foreign currency reserve jumped by 8.5 times from US\$ 3.5 billion to over US\$ 31 billion over the last seven years.

During the same period, power generation capacity grew up by almost 3 times and foreign direct investment also rose by 3 times.

A key to our development strategy is our focus on addressing inequality through social security, decent work and financial inclusion. We allocate over 13 per cent of our budget to social safety net spending, which is 2.3 per cent of our GDP.

Mr. President,

Climate change threatens many of our development gains. The landmark Paris Climate Agreement recognizes the importance of adaptation, loss and damage, and climate justice. Bangladesh has ratified the Agreement. We hope that the large carbon emitting countries would ratify the Agreement soon.

We must join ranks to preserve our natural resources for our succeeding generations. Bangladesh reaffirms the need for conservation and sustainable use of marine resources for tapping the potential of a 'Blue Economy'.

The life sustaining force of water is a finite resource. We have a shared responsibility to ensure judicious and equitable use of our common waters. We must stand by our pledge to provide clean drinking water and sanitation for all. I shall continue to champion these issues as a member of the High-level Panel on Water.

Mr. President,

I firmly believe that without women's participation, sustainable development would simply not be tenable. A host of measures, including promoting girls' education, undertaken half a decade ago started yielding dividends.

Women in Bangladesh are now increasingly becoming an integral part of our development endeavours. Around 3.5 million women are now working in the garments industry, the leading export earning sector. The percentage of women in all professions is rapidly rising. Bangladesh is perhaps the only country in the world

today that has a woman Prime Minister and Leader of the House, Leader of the Opposition, Speaker and Deputy Leader of the House. Presently, we have 70 women Members of Parliament constituting 20% of the House. Over 12,500 elected women representatives are serving in the local government bodies.

Mr. President,

Last year, I mentioned terrorism and violent extremism as one of the two major global challenges of our time. We see these menaces sweeping across borders. No country seems immune, no individual beyond their target.

The terrorists are killing now and often numerous innocent people everywhere from USA to Europe, Africa to Asia.

We believe, terrorists have no religion, caste or creed. We must unite in our resolve to defeat and degrade them in all forms and manifestations. We have to identify the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism. At the same time, we have to find out the mentors, masterminds, abettors, financiers, arms suppliers and trainers of the terrorists and extremists, and take strong action against them.

As a victim of terrorist attacks myself, I have a 'zero tolerance' approach to terrorism and violent extremism. Our Government did succeed in disintegrating the homegrown terrorist groups, plugging their regular financing pipelines, and flushing out the regional operatives from our territory. With the vicious rise of certain international terrorist entities, it appears some of the local fringe elements have drawn inspiration and managed to regroup and rebrand themselves.

Bangladesh, a unique country of religious harmony, experienced a grisly attack on 1 July 2016 when homegrown terrorists killed 20 people at a Dhaka restaurant. We were able to rescue 13 hostages unhurt. The horrific incident imprinted a deep scar on the hearts of Bangladeshi people.

We are now in battle with this new wave of terrorism. We have undertaken massive programs to awaken people against radicalization and stand against militancy and extremism. I have called for whole of society response and got unprecedented response.

Our women, youth, families and communities can be our vanguards in offsetting extremism and radicalization. I am confident, with our people's resilience and support, we will make sure terrorists will have no place in our soil.

At the same time, I would like to urge the world community to plug the sources of fund, arms and ammunition as well as moral and material support for the militants and terrorists across the borders.

Mr. President,

Bangladesh will carry on promoting a Culture of Peace at the heart of the UN's agenda. We shall uphold our contribution to peacekeeping and peace building. Our decision to set up a Peacebuilding Centre in Dhaka will allow us to share our experience with other countries emerging from conflicts.

Likewise, we shall remain vocal about recognizing the role of national judicial processes in ensuring accountability and justice for mass atrocities. We have moved past decades of impunity to ensure the trial of the local perpetrators of genocide and crimes against humanity during our Liberation War in 1971.

The recent efforts to resume the Middle East Peace Process and end hostilities against the brotherly Palestinian people must be pursued in the right direction.

Mr. President,

In our globalized world, there are challenges. But, there are also potential opportunities and benefits for all, only if we know how to manage it right.

We are all gathered here to serve our 'One Humanity'. Let us work through our differences, and find common grounds to make pragmatic changes we wish to see in the world around us. The UN provides us a unique platform to do so. Let us renew our resolve to create an organization of enduring relevance.

I thank you, Mr. President.

Khoda Hafez.
Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.

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