

**Statement by H. E. Sheikh Hasina  
Hon'ble Prime Minister  
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh  
General Debate of the 76th United Nations General Assembly  
Date: 24 September 2021**

**Mr. President,  
Assalamu Alaikum.**

I congratulate you on your election as the President of the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly. We have confidence in your '*Presidency of Hope*' to steer us through a sustainable recovery that leaves no one behind.

I also congratulate Mr. Volkan BOZKIR, the preceding President, for his leadership in the face of unprecedented challenges during the historic 75<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly. It's my great pride that this is my 17<sup>th</sup> participation in the UNGA to represent my country, Bangladesh.

This 76<sup>th</sup> UNGA comes at a time when COVID-19 is claiming lives across the globe. Many countries are being affected by recurring waves of new variants. The pandemic has battered the health systems and economies across the world. I pay tribute to all the frontline workers, for their dedicated service and sacrifice during this crisis. Against the grim reality of COVID 19, the theme of this session centering around 'hope', is very timely.

As an avowed supporter of multilateralism and the UN system, Bangladesh wishes to see this organization as a source of hope and aspiration during this critical time. We must set aside our differences and rise **as one** harnessing our collective strength to build back a better world for all.

**Mr. President,**

This is a very special year for us. This year we are celebrating the golden jubilee of our independence. This celebration coincides with ‘Mujib Year’, the Birth Centenary of our Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

I pay my profound respect and homage to the Father of **our** Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, whose selfless, lifelong struggle and visionary leadership brought us our long-cherished Independence. I also pay my deepest tribute to the valiant freedom fighters for their courage and sacrifices to free our motherland.

Our Father of the Nation was a strong advocate of multilateralism and called the United Nations ‘as the center of people’s future hopes and aspirations.’ On the very first day of our journey in the United Nations, he had said, and I quote from his maiden speech to the UNGA on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1974:

*“Our goal is self-reliance; our chosen path is the united and collective efforts of our people. International cooperation and the sharing of the resources and technology could, no doubt, make our task less onerous and reduce the cost in human suffering”.*

He called for building a world free of economic inequalities, social injustice, aggression, and threats of nuclear war. These are as relevant today as they were forty-seven years ago. As such, we continue to lend our voice and leadership to all those issues that aim at building an inclusive and equal society. Our calls for vaccine equality, our firm position against any form of injustice as against the Palestinian people, resolution of the Rohingya crisis, and promoting climate justice – are a few examples of our global commitment.

We have been working hard to fulfill the unfinished dream of our Father of the Nation. We are now among the five fastest growing economies in the world, ranking 41st in terms of GDP. Over the past decade, we have reduced the poverty rate from 31.5 per cent to 20.5 per cent. Our per capita income jumped to more than threefold in just one decade to twenty-two hundred 27 US dollars. Our foreign currency reserve has reached all time high to 48 billion dollars.

Bangladesh has made impressive progress in socio-economic sphere and women empowerment during last decade. The infant mortality rate has been reduced to 23.67 per one thousand; maternal mortality rate to 173 per one hundred thousand live births; and the average longevity of people rose to 73 years.

According to World Economic Forum, in political empowerment of women Bangladesh is ranked 7<sup>th</sup>; ahead of its regional neighbors since 2014.

Our 'Digital Bangladesh' initiative has stimulated transformative impacts on socio-economic development, education, disaster risk reduction, women's empowerment, and so on. Our social safety net programs have also made significant expansion. As for SDG Index Score, the Sustainable Development Report 2021 identified Bangladesh as having progressed the most since 2015. Such progress was due to heavy investment in women's advancement and empowerment, which contributed to our transformative development.

We have achieved the milestone of LDC graduation this year. Our vision is to transform Bangladesh into a knowledge-based developed country by 2041; and a prosperous and resilient Delta by 2100.

**Mr. President,**

The Covid-19's impact on Bangladesh has been much less than feared. It is mainly because of our healthcare system that has been strengthened from the grassroots level. Besides, we adopted a timely multi-pronged, multi-stakeholder approach to tackle its challenges. From the very beginning, we took some firm decisions to balance between life and livelihood. They included 28 stimulus packages to the tune of 14.6 billion US dollars or 4.44 per cent of our GDP to keep our economy afloat. We also allocated 1.61 billion US dollars for vaccines in the current budget cycle.

Notably, we gave serious attention to the most vulnerable sections of our society like the ultra-poor, disabled, elders, returnee migrants and vulnerable women. At the outbreak of the pandemic last year, we immediately distributed cash and other kinds of assistance to nearly 40 million people. Our well-timed intervention and our people's resilience helped us achieve over 5 per cent economic growth in 2020.

**Mr. President,**

Humanity, since time immemorial, has faced the onslaughts of nature and pestilence, as well as manmade conflicts and disasters. Yet humanity has survived these monumental challenges with hope in their hearts and belief in themselves.

This pandemic is another such crisis from which many inspiring stories of human survival and magnanimity have been born. Sadly though, this malaise seems likely to be here for a while, and therefore, as we have in the past must come forth with fresh, inclusive, and global ideas to fight this common enemy. Let me highlight a few specific issues in this regard.

**First**, for a COVID-free world, we must ensure universal and affordable access to vaccines for people across the world. In the last UNGA, I urged this august assembly to treat COVID-19 vaccines as a ‘global public good.’ This was echoed by many other leaders. Yet these calls remain largely unheeded. Instead, we have seen growing ‘vaccines divides’ between the rich and the poor nations.

According to the World Bank, 84 percent of vaccine doses have so far gone to people in high and upper middle-income countries, while the low-income countries received less than 1 percent. This vaccine inequality must be addressed urgently. We cannot chart out a sustainable recovery and be safe by leaving millions behind.

Therefore, I reiterate my call to ensure equitable and affordable access to vaccine for all. Immediate transfer of vaccine technologies could be a means to ensure vaccine equity. Bangladesh is ready to produce vaccines in mass scale if technical know-how is shared with us and patent waiver is granted.

**Second**, the pandemic has disproportionately impacted the climate vulnerable countries. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Working Group-I Report provided a grim scenario of our planet.

Unless there are immediate measures, the devastating impacts of climate change will be irreversible. No country, rich or poor, is immune of the destructive effects. We, therefore, call upon the rich and industrialized countries to cut emissions, compensate for the loss and damage, and ensure adequate financing and technology transfer for adaptation and resilience building.

As the Chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum and the Vulnerable Twenty Group of Ministers of Finance, we have launched the “Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan – Decade 2030” outlining a transformative agenda from climate vulnerability to climate prosperity.

The upcoming COP-26 Summit in Glasgow provides us with a good opportunity to rally support for such new and inclusive ideas. Let us not miss out on this opportunity.

**Third,** the pandemic has severely disrupted our education system. According to UNICEF, close to half the world's students were affected by partial or full school closures. Millions of students in low-income countries did not have the resources and technologies to join remote learning facilities, jeopardizing decades of gains in enrollment, literacy rates, etc.

We need a global plan to prioritize education recovery by investing in digital tools and services, access to internet, and capacity building of teachers. We also call the UN system to rally partnership and resources to make that happen.

**Fourth,** despite the unprecedented challenges by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are on the track to graduate from the LDC category. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, has put at risk the graduation prospect and aspiration of many countries. To motivate and incentivize sustainable graduation, we look forward to receiving more support from our development partners for an incentive-based graduation structure. As one of the co-chairs of the Preparatory Committee of the LDC 5 Conference, we expect concrete outcome of Doha conference enabling more countries to sustainably graduate out of the LDC category.

**Fifth,** migrants have been the frontline contributors during the pandemic as essential workers in the health and other emergency services. Yet many of them have been particularly hard-hit due to loss of jobs, salary cuts, lack of access to health and other social services, and forcible return. We urge the migrant receiving countries to treat them fairly and protect their job, health, and well-being during this trying time.

**Sixth,** the Rohingya crisis is in its fifth year now. Yet not a single Forcibly displaced Myanmar National could be repatriated to Myanmar. Despite the uncertainty created by the recent political developments in Myanmar, we expect enhanced focus and active support of the international community to find a durable

solution to this crisis. Myanmar must create the conditions conducive for their return. We are ready to work with the international community on this compelling priority.

On our part, to ensure their temporary stay in Bangladesh we have relocated some of the Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (Rohingya) to 'Bashan Char'. We have also included all eligible from them in the national vaccination drive to curb the spread of COVID-19 in the camps. I would like to reiterate that the crisis was created in Myanmar and its solution lies in Myanmar.

International community must work constructively for a permanent solution of the crisis through safe, sustainable, and dignified return of the Rohingyas to their home in the Rakhine State. While we expect the ASEAN leadership to step up their ongoing efforts, the international community needs to support all the accountability processes.

**Mr. President,**

We envision a peaceful, stable, and prosperous South Asia. We firmly believe that it is upon the people of Afghanistan to rebuild their country and decide the course of the future themselves. Bangladesh stands ready to continue to work with the people of Afghanistan and the international community for its socio-economic development.

Peace remains a pre-eminent focus of our foreign policy. As a proponent of the flagship resolution on Culture of Peace, we remain deeply committed to creating a peaceful society. The menace of terrorism and violent extremism are jeopardizing peace and security in many parts of the world. Therefore, we maintain a "zero tolerance policy" towards these menaces.

Today, we take pride as the leading peacekeeping nation and for our contribution to global peace. Despite unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, our peacekeepers are serving in some of the most difficult circumstances across the globe with utmost dedication and professionalism. The international community must do everything possible to ensure their safety and security.

As per our constitutional obligation, we have always been a steadfast supporter of complete disarmament.

We firmly believe that the ultimate guarantee of international peace and security lies in the total elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. It was from that conviction we ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapons (TPNW), which entered into force earlier this year.

**Mr. President,**

The Covid-19 has brought to the fore the inadequacy of the global response to tackle emergencies. It has also put a spotlight on the critical need for global solidarity and collaboration to effective Covid-19 response.

We must demonstrate our ability to work and act together on global common issues and create space for new partnerships and solutions. And that must start right here at the UN; with the member states; across regions; rising above narrow political interests. Only then can we pursue any meaningful collaboration towards a resilient and inclusive recovery.

At this critical juncture, the United Nations stands as our best hope.



Let us join our hands together to keep that hope alive.

Before I conclude, I wish to humbly remind this revered body established to ensure peace and justice around the world that I am still seeking justice for the brutal massacre of my family that took place 46 years ago. It was early in the morning of August 15, 1975, a band of renegade killers ruthlessly assassinated my father, the Father of the Nation and the then President of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, my loving mother, Sheikh Fazilutunnesa Mujib, my three brothers Freedom Fighter Captain Sheikh Kamal, Freedom Fighter Lt. Sheikh Jamal, 10-years old Sheikh Russell and paternal uncle Freedom Fighter Sheikh Abu Naser. Eighteen of my close family members were brutally murdered. My younger sister, Sheikh Rehana and I survived the carnage as we were abroad at the time. For 6 years we were on exile suffering from the agony of losing near and dear ones.

Nevertheless, my struggle continued and upon returning to Bangladesh, I have devoted my life to fulfilling the dream of my father, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for a happy and prosperous Golden Bangladesh. I shall continue to do so as long as I live, Insha Allah.

Thank you all once again.

Khoda Hafez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu

May Bangladesh Live-forever.