

Bangladesh Statement
Delivered by Amb. Md. Shahidul Haque, Foreign Secretary
At the Asia -Pacific Ministerial Dialogue:
From the Millennium Development Goals to the United Nations Development Agenda beyond
2015

Bangkok, 26 August, 2013

Mr. Chairman,
Hon'ble Ministers
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for giving me the floor. I compliment the Royal Thai Government for convening the Asia -Pacific Ministerial Dialogue, looking at the global development debate within the context of the MDGs and indeed the next set of goals.

2. The UN Millennium Declaration, adopted in 2000, contained a universally shared vision for development. The MDGs provided a basis for global and national development planning. Significant progress has since been achieved in attaining the MDGs, although at varying pace and intensity, between and among the countries and regions, and across MDGs.

3. We all agree, MDGs provide a solid framework for addressing global poverty and increasing focus on human development with a concrete and precise set of goals and targets. The MDGs helped our countries to set priorities for national development strategy as well. The setting of goals and targets, implementable exercises in a time-bound manner and monitored through statistical yardsticks have been the most important aspects of the MDGs.

4. In our Agenda-setting exercise for the post-2015 scenario, it is important to reflect and learn from past mistakes, gaps and missed opportunities. A new roadmap for the future should be developed through a broad-based consultative process. It would be equally important to ensure that the newer challenges, emerging issues and uncertainties are accorded due consideration and are appropriately reflective in the post-2015 development agenda.

5. Before we share our views on the post-2015 agenda, let me briefly share our experience in implementing MDGs in Bangladesh.

6. Over the four decades since our independence, we have made noteworthy progress: our real per capita increased by over 130 percent, while poverty was reduced by 60 percent. Despite shrinking farmland due to growing urbanization, our rice production tripled to over 35 million metric tons by now. Deep structural transformation in the economy has taken place as Bangladesh progressed to become the second largest ready-made garments exporter in the world, with annual exports registering over 21 billion USD during the last fiscal. We are now better equipped and more resilient to natural disasters, compared to 15 years ago.

7. Being mindful of the development challenges, the government under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, adopted the *Vision 2021* - which lay down concrete targets to transform the country into a middle income country by 2021 where people will have better standard of life, will have more equitable socioeconomic environment, better protected from and be able to cope with the impacts of climate change.

8. A recent World Bank report on "Bangladesh Poverty Assessment" looked at the progress in poverty reduction during the period 2000 -2010. It highlighted the following trends and elements:

- i. Bangladesh experience a uniform and steady decline in consumption based poverty rates during the decade;
- ii. Over the decades, there was a persistent decline in the number of poor people - from nearly 63 million (2000) to 55 million (2005) and 47 million (2010).
- iii. The remarkable reduction in poverty was coupled with equally impressive improvement in the living conditions of the poor.
- iv. The demographic characteristics of the poor did not change dramatically.
- v. Despite significant improvements in access to health and education services, large regional differences in access to electricity and sanitary facilities remain.

9. In recognition of the development advancements made, Bangladesh was awarded with South-south Award "Digital Health for Digital Development " in 2011; for innovative idea to use the information Communication Technology for progress of the health of women and children which had a huge impact on attainment of MDGs 3 and 4. This June, Bangladesh received the Diploma Award from FAO, for its achievement in MDG 1. Bangladesh, along with 37 other countries, were also honoured with "Special Recognition" for their outstanding progress in fighting hunger and poverty.

Mr Chairman,

10. In Bangladesh, to develop our own "Post 2015 Development Agenda", we were engaged in a year-long national multi-sectoral consultation. We submitted our position to UN in June this year. In the process, we identified 11 goals, 58 targets with 241 indicators:

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| <i>Goal 1:</i> | Unleash human potentials for sustainable development |
| <i>Goal 2:</i> | Eradicate poverty and reduce inequality |
| <i>Goal 3:</i> | Ensure sustainable food security and nutrition for all |
| <i>Goal 4:</i> | Universal access to health and family planning services |
| <i>Goal 5:</i> | Achieve gender equality |
| <i>Goal 6:</i> | Ensure quality education and skills for all |
| <i>Goal 7:</i> | Increase employment opportunities and ensure worker rights |
| <i>Goal 8:</i> | Ensure good governance |
| <i>Goal 9:</i> | Promote sustainable production and consumption |
| <i>Goal 10:</i> | Ensure environmental sustainability and disaster management |

Goal 11: Strengthen international cooperation and partnership for sustainable development

11. In our consultations, some of the following issues came out as clear priorities, from Bangladesh perspective:

- i. **Progress in poverty reduction** has been commendable, although at varying degree. Even if the target of reducing poverty by half is achieved, we will still have the remaining half of the poor living in extreme poverty and hunger.
- ii. **Inequality** in access to land and productive assets, nutritious food, safe drinking water has remained wide spread. **Violence against women**, widening **income inequality**, unemployment, **food and energy security** should receive greater consideration in the formulation of the post 2015 development agenda,
- iii. Similarly, ensuring **universal access to health and education** services is vital for inclusive social development. Our experience is that social security and social empowerment interventions have not only contributed in reducing incidence of poverty and increasing labour wages, but also helped to enhance our economic growth. It should be a critical element for post-2015 vision.
- iv. **Demographic dynamics** is yet another area that has not received adequate attention in MDGs. By 2050, the world population will stand at 9 billion - with 85% of them living in the developing world. The increasing world population will create huge pressure on land and other natural resources. The growing number of youth seeking employment, the fast-ageing population and rapid urbanization all pose enormous challenges for sustainable development.
- v. Likewise, **international migration** affects every region. International migration benefits both the sending and receiving countries. However many immigrants continue to work and live in hazardous condition and are often marginalized and subject to discrimination and social exclusion.

12. **Global** economic development has come at a high cost of depleting natural resources and **environmental degradation**. The increased incidence of natural disasters is attributable, in part, to human induced **climate change**. Natural disasters can wipe out years of infrastructure investment and slide back development goals. These natural disasters have most severe impact on the poorest and most vulnerable in the LDCs in low-income developing countries.

Excellencies

13. The challenges of **energy security, water security, disaster preparedness, climate change adaptation and mitigation goals and targets must equally get due consideration in the post-2015 development agenda**. Transition to low-carbon energy sources must be accompanied by support for more efficient use of energy and know-how of energy efficient technologies.

13. The Post 2015 Consultation on Population Dynamics on Migration, in Dhaka this March, called for, among other things, adopting right-based, economic well being oriented and gender responsive approaches to population dynamics, strengthening migration governance to achieve a balanced and equitable regime and provide special support to the poorest, disadvantage and more vulnerable population, including these affected by climate change and natural disaster. **Clearly, there is a need to focus on this area; and we need to set clear goals and targets to efficiently address population dynamics.**

Mr. Chairman, dear participants

14. Today's challenges are becoming increasingly cross border and multilayered. Single country undertaking cannot address these complex issues. Regional cooperation and sub-regional multi- party initiatives are vital for attaining more sustainable equitable and balanced development. It is important to clearly recognize global interdependence amongst countries and including all stakeholders who have the potential to support attainment of these development goals.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that we must approach the post 2015 development agenda with a sense of shared responsibility of all countries and clearly defined accountability. The people must be at the centre of our understanding and undertakings. That would be the key to success.

Thank you, Sir.
