

45th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of OIC

Inaugural Ceremony

Speech by

H.E. Sheikh Hasina

Hon'ble Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

**Hon'ble Foreign Ministers,
The Special Guest, Ms. Chrystia Freeland,
Distinguished Heads of Delegation, Honoured Guests,
Secretary General, Mr. Yousef A Othaimeen,
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Assalamu Alaikum Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatuhu.

It's a pleasure for me to be with you today at this august inaugural of the 45th OIC Council of Foreign Ministers - CFM. I welcome you all in this historic city of Dhaka.

I recall with great gratitude our Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, under whose visionary leadership, Bangladesh joined the OIC in 1974. He realised early on the necessity of collective voice of the Ummah on issues of global importance. He stressed on unity and solidarity within the Ummah in its common aspirations of peace, prosperity, development and security. His vision still inspires us to move ahead as a nation.

Excellencies and Distinguished Guests,

The Dhaka CFM has come at a very critical time of history. With the accelerating influx of technology; with a rising number of youth – and inequality, intolerance and social injustice; with adverse climate change,- there has also never been a time more profound when our Islamic beliefs have so fundamentally been challenged.

There has never been a time when the Muslim world was faced with so much of conflicts, internal strife, division and instability and witnessed such large scale displacements of dispossessed populations. The Muslim identity wrongly though, is being equated with that of extremism and violence. These cannot go on. Time has come for a "paradigm shift" in our consciousness; for a fresh approach to start shaping our future of sustainable peace, solidarity and prosperity.

Distinguished Guests,

The Holy Prophet's (SAW) message for us was to stand by the distressed humanity. So, when the Rohingya community of Myanmar is being subjected to "ethnic cleansing", OIC fraternity cannot overlook it. In Bangladesh, we have opened our hearts and borders to the suffering humanity. More than a million Rohingyas took shelter in Bangladesh, purely on humanitarian grounds.

I felt moved, as I myself once suffered refugee like situation for six years. I was unable to return home after my father– the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, along with 18 family members, was brutally assassinated. My appeal, therefore, to the OIC is to stand solid by the forcibly deported Rohingyas in safeguarding their dignity and security.

OIC must maintain international pressure on Myanmar authorities and make Myanmar deliver on the ground as it agreed with Bangladesh for Rohingyas to safely return from Bangladesh. Rohingyas deserve the right to life, dignity and existence like us!

Hon'ble Ministers,

My country has lately met all three criteria to graduate out of the LDC status despite its ongoing frontline battle against climate change and other constraints. Bangladesh is moving ahead under the 2021 Vision of a digital country and then of a developed one by 2041.

Termed as a model of developing country, Bangladesh has made high marks in empowering women, progressing admirably in education and health, containing terrorism and keeping global peace through UN peacekeeping missions. Our centuries old interfaith harmony remains exemplary. Bangladesh has made a miracle with an average economic growth of over 7%. It's moving confidently in infra-structure development and connectivity initiatives.

Our strength is our youth, women and our demographic dividend. We must invest in our youth and technology to turn them into productive forces. Based on this youth resources, even in the wider OIC context, we can create a virtuous cycle of peace and development.

Women are an equal partner with men in our march into the future. Our planning horizon has rightly a gender-mainstreamed vision.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman believed in a principle of friendship to all and malice to none. We believe that all differences of opinion and views that we have been experiencing in the Islamic world can be resolved by open-minded discussions and dialogue. Bloodshed is unnecessary and indeed counter-productive.

Our vision of the Islamic world should be one to be master of its own resources and capable of resolving all of our conflicts and problems by ourselves. For, solutions to be lasting have to come from within. For this we require a comprehensively reformed OIC with new mechanisms, and ways and means to deliver in a result oriented manner.

Hon'ble Ministers,

What I suggest in my four point proposal made in Riyadh Conference in 2017 to address terrorism still remains valid. We should stop supply of arms; stop flow of financing for terrorism; remove divisions within the Ummah; and pursue peaceful settlement of conflicts through dialogue resulting in a win-win situation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With one fifth of the world's population, more than a third of the world's strategic resources and a number of rising economies with immense prospects, the Muslim world has no reason to remain behind or fall in disrespect. Development is our right, economic prosperity is within our reach, and social progress is within our means. We must redesign our strategy of joint Islamic action. In this context, let me share some of my thoughts:

First, Trust on the basic Islamic faith. We should banish sectarian mindset and stop using religion as a tool for divisive purposes or narrow political ends.

Second, Resolve our conflicts peacefully. We should politically resolve our issues without giving any of our detractors scope for interference and intervention. We should strengthen our conflict resolution mechanisms and make firm advancement on our own strength and resources.

Third, Live an enlightened life of self-awareness. We should live relevantly in the society of today without compromising our fundamental faith. There may not then be a cause for Islamophobia. We should foster value based international relations to show the way to an enlightened global order.

Fourth, Pursue a fast track development course with bold OIC programmes to eliminate poverty and hunger and address humanitarian exigencies. We should pursue collective actions to implement the OIC-2025 Programme of Action.

Finally, We should constantly seek inspiration and strength from the eternal values of Islam- peace, moderation, fraternity, equality, justice and compassion.

Let us make a resolve to put our strength and courage together and protect our values, wealth and civilization. Let us spread a message of understanding and peace. May the Almighty Allah bless us all!

Khoda Hafez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu

May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Long Live Islamic Fraternity.

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