

**South, Southwest, North and Central Asia Parliamentarian
and CSO Forum On MDG Acceleration
and the Post-2015 Development Agenda**

Speech by

H.E.Sheikh Hasina

Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Hon'ble Speaker Mr. Abdul Hamid Advocate,
Hon'ble Speakers of Kyrgyzstan and the Indian State of Bihar,
Ministers and MPs from South, Southwest, North, and Central Asia,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamu Alaikum and Good Afternoon to you all.

It is my pleasure to warmly welcome you all to Bangladesh and to express my thanks to the Bangladesh Parliament, and the regional and international as well as private organizations, for hosting and organizing this important Conference of Asian Parliamentarians, and the CSO Forum, in Dhaka.

I am confident that this gathering of experienced and enlightened participants and their valuable exchanges would help design a pragmatic strategy to realize a world free of poverty and hunger, discrimination and deprivation, extremism and environmental degradation, and conscious of their democratic rights and privileges.

I am also confident that such a strategy would help ongoing efforts to realize the Millennium Development Goals within the "2015 time frame" set by the UN Millennium Summit of 2000.

The Post 2015 approach would then certainly take into account the innovations and improvement of the new technologies, and the existing digital divide between the North and the South to ensure social, economic and political justice for all.

At present over a billion people across the world is caught in the vicious cycle of poverty, a phenomenon, which occurs due to tangled web of local situations combined with national and international circumstances. Such circumstances also include economic processes at a variety of levels, social and economic conditions, climate change impacts, extremism, environmental degradations, absence of democracy, and exclusion of people on the basis of class, caste, gender, disability, age, race and religion.

Distinguished Guests,

The Millennium Development Goals Report of 2012 highlights national governments, the United Nations, the private sector and the civil society success in saving and improving lives.

Visible progress has been made worldwide in alleviating poverty, and improving access to clean water, lives of slum dwellers, universal primary education, gender equality in primary schools, child survival, access to HIV treatment, among others.

Challenges in decreasing hunger, maternal mortality rate, number of slum dwellers, sanitation and clean water, and employment however still remain which have to faced with courage and conviction.

In Eastern and South Eastern Asia, success is pronounced in meeting the MDGs target of halving extreme poverty. Unfortunately, most of South Asia is likely to miss the target, although Bangladesh, despite being an LDC, has been successful in reducing poverty level by 10 percent.

Indeed, South Asia, with over one-fifth of world population, has lagged behind due to the severe impacts of climate change and the recent global economic meltdown leading to also high food and fuel prices

Estimates indicate that at the current rate of progress, a billion people will still be living at a less than US \$1.25 a day in 2015. Estimates also indicate that four out of every five people living in extreme poverty will live in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia.

Progress in poverty eradication is possible only if the developing countries, especially in these regions, maintain robust growth rate; addresses the undesirable conditions where extreme poverty thrives; prioritize development of health and education essential for productive employment; and on the other hand, the developed countries fulfill the financial commitments made by them.

Bangladesh, a densely populated country with many constraints, has made noteworthy progress in the past few years in poverty alleviation due to pro-poor policy and empowerment of people.

We have been achieving 6.5% GDP growth for the last 3 years. The inflation rate has been reduced to 4.97% from 11% and that of food inflation to 2.25% from 13%. The per capita income has risen to US\$ 850. The country is now self-sufficient in food production. The electricity production rose to 6365 Megawatt from 3200 Megawatt in 2009.

The foreign exchange reserve is over US\$ 12 billion. Last year, we distributed 23 crore books at free of cost among the students up to secondary level. We are also established 15 thousand community clinics and health centers across the country. Some 4582 union information and service centers have been established. We have entered into the 3G mobile regime.

During the last 3 and a half years, about 50 million people have been elevated to the middle income group from low-income status.

In achieving the MDGs, Bangladesh is cited as a role model, in alleviating poverty, net enrollment in primary education, gender parity in primary and secondary education, reducing child and maternal mortality rates, improving immunization coverage, eliminating malaria and tuberculosis, improving drinking water supply and sanitation.

We have also achieved laudable progress in women's empowerment though their significant involvement in politics, and in their greater participation and placement in senior positions in the judiciary, bureaucracy, diplomatic service, armed services, peace keeping missions and in all other walks of life.

Our aim is to turn our country into "Digital Bangladesh" and a middle income country by realizing our "Vision 2021", and to become "Golden Bangladesh" as dreamt of by the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

With his vision and with my lifelong experiences in politics, I presented the "People's Empowerment" Model at the UNGA which adopted it in its 67th Session. It is based on the theme that justice ensures peace, a precondition for development, and justice is possible only through democracy, which empowers people.

In contrast, absence of democracy causes social injustice, poverty, inequality, deprivation, marginalization and leads to extremism and terrorism.

The Model calls for a holistic and integrated approach of six core issues - eradication of poverty and hunger; reduction of inequality; mitigation of deprivation; inclusion of excluded people; acceleration of human development; and elimination of terrorism.

Our aim is human dignity and better life for all across the world, sustainable and equitable growth and development, and justice and peace are important means to achieve them.

I am confident that this Conference with your active participation will be able to contribute valuable inputs and suggestions to the UN High-Level Panel that the UN Secretary General has constituted for the post 2015 roadmap.

I hope that your deliberations here in Dhaka will help shape a new world where justice, peace and equity will be the core of development.

Hon'ble Guests,

It is now my great pleasure to declare this important conference open.

Khoda Hafez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.

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