

2nd Global Tiger Stocktaking Conference Inaugural Session

Speech
By

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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

The Chair,
Dear Colleagues,
Delegates from Tiger Range countries,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamu Alaikum and a very Good Morning to you all.

I welcome you at the second Global Tiger Stocktaking Conference of the Tiger Range Countries and Global Tiger Initiative partners.

We also feel proud to have hosted the first General Assembly of Global Tiger Forum on 18-20 January 2000.

Distinguished Delegates & Invitees,

Wild tigers have for centuries occupied a special place in the nature and culture of Asia. Tiger has been declared as the national animal in many countries and it is a symbol of strength and courage.

Unplanned human population growth, indiscriminate industrialization, destruction of forest and overall development pressure are causing depletion of the habitat of tigers.

At the same time, illegal poaching and quizzing of its habitat make the tiger an endangered species. During the last one century, the population of this spectacular animal has been reduced from over one hundred thousand to a mere 3,700 worldwide now.

I hope that this conference would play a significant role in increasing tiger population, and conserving and ensuring secured life of this beautiful creature.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We, the Heads of Government of Tiger Range Countries, being the custodians of the last remaining tigers in the wild, gathered with the common goal of conservation of tigers at an International Tiger Forum in St. Petersburg, Russia in November 2010.

We expressed our determination to strive to double the number of wild tigers across their range by 2022 on the basis of the tiger population in 2010. To reach this goal, we also endorsed an implementation mechanism.

A 9-point Action Agenda was adopted at the Second Asian Ministerial Conference on Tiger Conservation in October 2012 in the Bhutanese capital, Thimpu, where the delegation heads of Tiger Range Countries committed to enhancing collaboration in management of trans-boundary landscapes and corridors, combating illegal trade, and eliminating illicit demand.

An International Workshop on Trans-boundary Conservation of Tigers and other endangered species and strategy for combating illegal wildlife trade was held in Kunming of China in 2013.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Sunderbans, the largest mangrove forest in the world covering an area of 6017 square kilometers, in the southwest of Bangladesh is the habitat of the world famous Royal Bengal Tiger.

The Royal Bengal Tiger is our national animal. It has been playing a pivotal role in protecting the Sundarbans. The existence of the Sundarbans will be at stake without the Royal Bengal Tigers.

Declared as a Natural World Heritage Site in 1997 by UNESCO, the Sunderbans faces severe threats of global warming and sea level rise; climate change and cyclones; saline water intrusions and tidal surges.

Moreover, encroachment of 1.2 million people and their livelihood off the forest have made tiger-human conflicts common.

We have taken a number of programmes for conservation of our national animal. We are implementing National Tiger Recovery Programme and Bangladesh Tiger Action Plan (2009-2017). We have also enacted Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act, 2012. Under this Act, a tiger hunter or poacher is liable to be punished with 2-7 years imprisonment including fine up to 1 million taka.

With the assistance of World Bank, a regional project titled "Strengthening Regional Co-operation for Wildlife Protection" covering Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal has been undertaken to strengthen wildlife protection, capacity building and restoration of biodiversity in the region.

Crime Control Unit of Forest Department is assisting the law enforcers in smuggling wildlife, illegal trading and demonstration. A Wildlife Rescue Centre has been established in Khulna to provide medicare to sick tigers.

Supported by Regional Wildlife Project, Camera Trapping Survey for estimation of tiger population in the Sundarbans is going on with the assistance of Wildlife Institute of India. The result of the survey is likely to be available in December 2014.

A Tiger Response Team has been formed with the Wild Team and the locals at Shyamnagar in Satkhira and 49 Village Response Team formed surrounding the Sundarbans to minimize the incidence of tiger-human conflicts and to save the stray out tigers. This has made easier to take precautionary measures and exchange information on intrusion of tigers in localities.

Four Co-management Council and Committee for collaborative management through USAID supported project have been formed. With the assistance of European Union, the project titled "Sundarbans Environment and Livelihood Security (SEALS)" is being implemented to strengthen logistic support of the Department of Forests as well as to create alternative income generation opportunities for the Sundarbans communities. Policy has been framed for compensation to people injured or dead by tiger attacks.

Staffs of the Department of Forest have been trained for immobilization, capture and release of strayed out tigers.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and a bilateral Protocol have been signed between Bangladesh and India for "Conservation of the Royal Bengal Tigers of the Sundarbans".

Following our steps, there was no report of any tiger killing during last two years. Earlier, on an average 3-4 tigers were killed every year. On the other hand, human casualties have been reduced to 4 from 25-30 a year.

The Sunderbans needs to be saved for its colossal storage of biodiversity, besides the precious Royal Bengal Tiger. It's a unique place of natural beauty and biodiversity. The Sundarbans is a natural protector of the southern coastal areas of Bangladesh from cyclone and other calamities originated in the Bay of Bengal.

We are more than three years into the Global Tiger Recovery Program. I believe we have arrived at a tuning point to reach our desired goals of protecting tigers. We have to take steps reviewing our previous activities and renewing our plans, activities and implementation strategies.

I hope that in continuation of the previous efforts, this Conference will make a significant stride towards implementation of the Global Tiger Recovery Programme aiming to double the number of wild tigers by the Tiger Range Countries and their partners as directed by the Thimphu Affirmative Nine-Point Action Agenda on Tiger Conservation.

I want to assure you all that my government will do everything for conservation of the tigers.

I also hope that the tiger range countries would keep their continued efforts for protecting tigers. Let us join hands to save the tigers and save the nature.

With these few words, I declare the conference open.

Khoda Hafez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu

May Bangladesh Live Forever.

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