

15th Summit of Non-Aligned Movement

Statement by

Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina

Hon'ble Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

**Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

I have great pleasure in congratulating you, President Hosni Mubarak, on your assuming the Chair of the 15th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement. I believe your wise and able stewardship would steer the Movement forward, in facing the new and unique challenges of today's world. I also congratulate President Raol Castro Ruz and Cuba, for the extraordinary leadership and service to the Movement, during the last three years.

Mr. Chairman,

I do not wish to miss this opportunity to express deep gratitude of our delegation, and of myself, to you and the brotherly people of Egypt, for the very warm hospitality extended to us in this beautiful resort city of Sharm El Shaikh.

Mr. Chairman,

As I speak today in the 15th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, I recall with mixed emotion the participation of my father and the Father of our Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, as Prime Minister of Bangladesh, in the NAM Summit of 1974, at Algiers. I also remember his nostalgic narration of his memorable visit to Egypt then, at the invitation of President Anwar Saadat. Those were the days of great leaders who led their nations from exploitation to freedom and glory. Many of them are no more, some taken away under unusual circumstances, by reactionary conspiracies. The lone survivor today is President Fidel Castro of Cuba who continues to remain an inspiration of the Movement. On this important occasion, let us all remember those charismatic leaders of the past, and their legacy, with humility and a prayer of gratitude.

Over half a century of its existence, the Non-Alignment Movement has been confronted with varied, difficult challenges emerging out of the ever changing world. Through these years, however, the Movement's aim had remained the same in providing a supreme political platform to its members for harmonizing policies and devising the best course of action. Its modality, however, had to obviously take into account the new priorities and challenges of time.

I believe climate change remains as one of the most daunting global challenge of our time. It has far-reaching effects on all nations of the world, particularly on the LDCs. Bangladesh, in a low lying delta, is deeply concerned with climate change and global warming. A perceptible rise in sea level would submerge a third of the country burgeoning its already thick population and limited resources. Although the LDCs have little responsibility for this universal dilemma of climate change, they remain highly vulnerable to its diverse impacts. Yet, unfortunately, their particular needs are often bypassed when formulating global policy solutions.

It is vital that LDCs concerns are taken into account in the forthcoming meeting on climate change in Copenhagen. There, agreed outcomes should include specific provisions for deeper cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, assured adequate funding, and affordable, eco-friendly technology transfer to developing countries. The post - 2012 agreement should also incorporate legally binding commitments covering the adaptation needs, particularly for the low lying, and small

island countries. Such adaptation financing should supplement the historical commitment of 0.7% of ODA, and not delivered as part of it.

The world is now experiencing an intractable global economic recession. The most vulnerable countries, which are not responsible for this situation, however, stand to suffer the most. Years of negligence to equity and justice, including basically an unfair international financial structure has, to a large extent, contributed to this situation. The developed countries must accept that the financial crisis would further aggravate, in the event of negligence of the current needs of developing countries, especially those of LDCs.

Immediate restructuring of the global financial and economic system is the call of the day for overcoming the current crisis, and avoidance of similar recurrence in future. The G-20 and the Brettonwoods Institutions, that is, the World Bank and the IMF, need stronger presence and voice of developing countries, particularly the LDCs. Voting weight, proportionate to share capital, is unsuitable for Brettonwoods Institutions, which are responsible for orderly management of the world economy, and global development.

In global trade, adoption of policies with narrow outlook would result in slowdown, from which all would lose in the long run. Instead, the developed countries should offer key development deliverables such as duty-free, quota-free market access, trade capacity building, etc, as stimulus package, especially to LDCs. Also, recovery measures should be designed so that employment opportunities of immigrant workers from developing countries are not adversely affected.

The food crisis of early 2008 still exists. A surge of world's hungry from 854 million to 967 million within the year, is a rollback of a key millennium development goal. The FAO indicates that 36 countries are still exposed to a critical food crisis, 28 of them being LDCs. The crisis has been compounded by acute production shortfalls, worsening economic situation, and adverse climate conditions. It is necessary for the international community to make long term investment in food production; fertilizers, irrigation and agricultural technologies.

Mr. Chairman,

Global peace and security remain one of the Movements' overriding concerns, with the United Nations, and its universal membership, as the most legitimate body, to deal with them. United Nations Peace Keeping Operations has been acclaimed by successive NAM Ministerial Conferences. NAM's commitment is evident from the 80% peacekeepers provided by its member countries. Bangladesh is proud of being among the top contributors for the last decade and half. Here, let me emphasize that PKOs are only means to support peace, and can in no way be a substitute for addressing the root causes of conflict.

In today's world, terrorism has demanded more attention and resources than any other issue. Bangladesh denounces terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. It was a brutal act of terrorism that killed the father of the nation, also my father, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and eighteen family members on 15 August 1975. It was another act of terrorism, this time directed against me, on 21 August 2004, which left 22 of my party members dead. In the first instance, I was abroad with my sister Rehana, and in the second, it was simply a miraculous saving.

All acts of terror are fundamentally flawed and unequivocally criminal. Therefore, Bangladesh fully supports the Movement's principled position on terrorism, and other measures recommended to deal with it. Bangladesh also recognizes the value of regional anti-terrorism arrangements, and instruments for combating terrorism. Thus, my Government has proposed establishment of a South Asian Task Force on Counter-Terrorism, and is now working with regional partners on its scope, dimension and modalities.

Here, I would like to inform of a local war and terrorism that raged in the hilly south eastern region of Bangladesh for over twenty years costing over twenty thousand lives. It was our

previous government (1996-2001) that ended it through negotiations, and the 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accords. During the period, our government also negotiated with neighboring India, the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty, for 30 years of water sharing, thereby inspiring greater cooperation in other issues, the most significant being the growing menace of terrorism in South Asia.

Terrorism in its most blatant form is, however, continuing in the Middle-East. The Palestinian people are being subjected to murder, torture, humiliation and all forms of injustices, on a daily basis, for decades. NAM has remained seized with this issue since its inception. Clearly, Israel's occupation of Palestine is illegal, and is in violation of UN Security Resolution 242, which firmly states Israel is not to gain territory through war, and must withdraw from occupied territories. Yet settlements in the occupied territories continue unabated by Israel, defying universal opinion, including that of its most powerful ally. Indeed, the policy of collective punishment of the Palestinians by Israel is one of the dark chapters in human history. Hundreds of checkpoints in tiny Gaza and West Bank have fragmented Palestine, into myriads of miniscule enclaves. Sadly, the inhuman conditions purposely imposed on a segment of the human race by another in our times, is a shameful reflection on mankind.

Mr. Chairman,

I consider it important to inform the Movement that a nationwide election, widely acclaimed as free and fair, in a credible environment, was held under close supervision of international observers, on 29 December 2008, in Bangladesh. Through this election, the overwhelming majority of people placed their confidence in my party-the Awami League and its partners, which formed government, and now implementing the election manifestos, aimed at transforming the country into a middle income digital Bangladesh by 2021.

I also consider it necessary to recapitulate, how the efforts of our last government (1996-2001), to create institutions representing people's will, wherein lay the essence of democracy, were thwarted by an opposition alliance of reactionary and extremist forces. This time, therefore, our immediate step, within days of the first session of the Parliament, was to form and commence all the 48 parliamentary committees (with opposition sharing positions), to consolidate the foundation of parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh. To be sure, all the ministries of the government are answerable to these committees.

In the six months of our governance, despite some unforeseen calamities like the devastation caused by Cyclone Aila, and the turmoil within the border paramilitary forces causing deaths, among a few others, of 58 of our valiant young military officers, at the incitement of quarters engaged in destabilizing the government; and global economic recession, our achievements have been widely acclaimed.

Our government is committed to people's power and welfare, and our aim is to bring fundamental socio-economic changes. In its previous term (1996-2001), our government attained annual economic growth above 6%, and stabilized inflation below 2%, encouraging investment. Our government also adopted several welfare programs for the poor and the vulnerable. Our current government aims to accelerate growth and equity through education, technological transformation, and a wide array of social safety programs. Already primary education is made free; secondary education supported by grants for stipends for girls, and teachers' remuneration; technical education at pre-secondary, secondary level expanded; and college graduation level made free.

Our government's welfare programs include creation of jobs through investment in infrastructures; food rations to keep prices low and help low income group; expanding food for works program (FWP), and vulnerable group feeding program (VGF); and cash allowances for the old, physically weak, widows and destitute women. To meet the challenge posed by the current global economic crisis, our strategy focuses on support for stimulating domestic production, and

demand for consumption. This would create employment, generate income, and protect people from the debilitating pressure of the global meltdown.

Other significant achievements within this period has been bringing down inflation from 10% to 5.4%; raising exports by 22.5% over the same period last year; launching a people friendly budget with emphasis on safety net provisions; bolstering the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to fight corruption; and strengthening the Election Commission for future impartial conduct of elections.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, I would like to point out that global events have taken many unpredictable turns in recent times, and it is, therefore, possible to plunge ourselves into various unanticipated crises. On the other hand, it is also possible to effectively deal with such situations. The need for working in unison has never been stronger. Hence, NAM and its able stewardship are relevant now more than ever before. Through greater cooperation within a more unified movement, the developing world can make legitimate concerns better addressed, and interests realized. Let us, therefore, renew our pledge to remain united, for achievements of our desirable objectives, and a better world for our future generations.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Khoda Hafez
Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever