

High Level Plenary Meeting - Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Statement by

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Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Distinguished Co-Chairs,
Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki Moon,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalam Alaikum and Good Morning.

I am pleased to address the High Level Plenary on the Millennium Development Goals. I am particularly pleased, because I was one of the 189 Heads of States and Governments who adopted the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs during the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000. The Millennium Declaration is the Magna Carta for a poverty-free world, and I am glad to have been a part in its adoption.

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

The MDGs, which aims at facilitating development and eradicating poverty, was adopted by an unprecedented consensus. This consensus was reinforced by world leaders at the 2005 Millennium Summit. The MDGs have given us a benchmark to measure performance of national governments, private sectors, civil body, development partners, the UN and other intergovernmental bodies. The benchmark also provides opportunity for assessing progress in achieving the internationally agreed development targets.

During my last tenure as Prime Minister, our government took steps to mainstream MDGs in our national development plans. The aim was to ensure national ownership of the MDGs, and to demonstrate our commitment to achieve them, within the stipulated timeframe of 2015.

The planning and budgeting process since 2001, thus, sought to achieve the MDGs as part of our national development. During our present tenure, we have set a Five Year Plan to achieve the MDG targets, as a step towards making our country a middle income one and a "Digital Bangladesh" by 2021, the Golden Jubilee Year of our independence.

However, the world food and energy crises of the past years, the ensuing global economic recession, world trade decline, dismal investments and the impact of climate change have retarded our pace for achieving the MDGs. Yet Bangladesh has been able to achieve satisfactory progress, with the support of the UN system, and bilateral and multilateral partners.

Our achievements on MDG-1 (poverty alleviation); MDG-2 (universal primary education); MDG-3 (gender equality and women empowerment); and MDG-4 (reduction of child mortality) are encouraging, and on track. Projections indicate our success to lift 12 million people out of poverty by 2015, thereby, reducing poverty by half by then, as targeted in MDG-1.

Our success also include enhancing minimum dietary energy consumption, net enrollment in primary education, gender parity in primary and secondary education, reducing child and infant

mortality, improving immunization coverage, rolling back malaria, controlling tuberculosis, low prevalence of HIV/AIDS, and improved access to safe drinking water and sanitation. But there are other MDGs facing difficulties for lack of resources, such as reduction of underweight children, maternal mortality, income inequality; completion of primary education, adult education, ratio of girls to boys in tertiary education; antenatal care, vulnerabilities of women, health for all; planned use of land and urbanization; creativity and human capital; and social justice.

A formidable challenge confronting Bangladesh is erratic and frequently occurring natural disasters, due to global warming, which is pushing "climate migrants" in our overburdened cities, and posing threat to our achieving MDG-1 by 2015.

Estimates indicate that a meter rise in sea level would submerge a quarter of our land mass, displacing 30 million people, and making it difficult to sustain a poverty free post 2015 era. One in every seven persons in Bangladesh would be a "climate migrant," due to excessive green house gas emissions by industrialized countries. Sadly, while climate forums debate adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer, green fund, the unfortunate plight of "climate migrants" is deftly sidetracked. I urge the global community to be sensitive to this emerging challenge, and find innovative ways for their rehabilitation.

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

We deeply appreciate the Secretary General's Report, "Keeping the Promise- forward looking review to promote an agreed action agenda to achieve the MDGs by 2015". The Report concludes that MDG track record is mixed, and underlines that at the global level, there exist normative and implementation gaps, in terms of addressing the core development issues. In the recent UNDP forum on "What will it take to achieve the MDGs by 2015" the findings indicate MDGs are achievable when nationally owned development strategies, policies and programs are supported by international development partners. Bangladesh is in full agreement with these findings.

Moreover, Bangladesh is committed to playing a part in attaining the MDGs by 2015. While the developed world is also committed to doing the same, they need to demonstrate their sincerity by helping reduce the implementation gap. Clearly, the answer lies in fulfilling their ODA commitment of 0.7 percent of their GNI to developing countries, and 0.2 percent to LDCs by 2010, as reaffirmed in the Brussels Program of Action for LDCs.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh has prepared with UN assistance a Report titled "MDG Needs, Assessment, and Costing for Bangladesh." The Report indicates that US \$ 22.10 billion will be required to attain all MDGs in Bangladesh during 2009-2015, suggesting an outlay of US \$ 4.4 billion a year. A substantial portion of this has to come from the development partners.

These estimates take into account global declaration on resource flow to developing countries and especially LDCs. In particular, the Monterrey Consensus is a cornerstone for this ambitious resources budgeting.

Although Bangladesh seeks required external assistance, its absence never halted our programs. We continue with our domestic efforts, as we did with sanitation and water supply, where external support fell short by US \$ 560 million.

I would like to refer to as seminal comment from Ms. Helen Clark, the UNDP Administrator and Chair of UNDG, also a co-signatory of the Millennium Declaration as the former Prime Minister of New Zealand, who said and I quote "If we are to reach the MDGs by 2015, then 2010 must spark five years of accelerated progress." Unquote.

I agree with Ms. Helen Clark that the global recession, the food and fuel crisis, the challenges of climate change and natural disasters generally have complicated the road to 2015. But they do not make the MDGs unattainable if we collectively determine and partner to achieve them. Let us rise and resolve in that spirit as one community in a globalized world to achieve all

our Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs), including the MDGs, thereby serving ourselves, our progeny, and posterity.

In conclusion, I would like to pledge Bangladesh's resolve and commitment towards MDGs and beyond. We will achieve self sufficiency in food by 2021; ensure 100 percent net enrolment at primary level by 2015; eliminate gender disparity at all levels of education by 2015; enhance economic participation of women to 40 percent by 2021; reduce maternal mortality to 15 percent and infant mortality to 15 thousand live births by 2021; increase life expectancy to 70 years by 2021; provide safe drinking water for all by 2011 and hygienic sanitation by 2013; and achieve a "Digital Bangladesh" for global connectivity by implementing our national ICT Policy by 2021.

I thank you all for your patient hearing.

Khoda Hafez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.
