

Munich Security Conference
“Climate Change as a security threat”

Remarks by
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Bismillahir Rahmanir

Excellencies
Dear friends.

Assalamu Alaikum and a very Good Morning/Afternoon to you all.

Climate change becomes a real threat for human being with unabated rise of global temperature.

In Bangladesh, increasing cyclones, storm surge and monsoon flooding challenge livelihood of our people. Our Bay of Bengal is increasingly getting acidic. Twenty percent of our people living along the coast and one-third of Bangladesh’s population eventually risk displacement with rising sea level although we have little contribution to global warming.

Flooding erodes river-banks during every monsoon. Numerous families overnight become homeless and helpless. We lose thousands of acres of precious farmlands. And, let’s note that our mighty rivers carry nearly one-fourth of entire load of sediment carried by all the major river systems in the world every year!

The erratic pattern and intensity of rainfall and rising heat make farming difficult for our people. There are reports of growing water stress during dry season.

Changing climate is taking toll through emergence of new pathogens. Diseases like Malaria which we successfully eradicated, risks a comeback. Similar risks are evident in diseases in cereals, livestock and poultry. Temperature variation is challenging breeding of our national fish – Hilsa. All these are serious enough challenges for the precious gains we made in development.

Dear friends,

Despite all these climatic stress and challenges today, Bangladesh is the 4th largest in rice and fish production, 5th largest in vegetable production, within top ten in horticulture – globally.

And, we also offer the world a magical eco-fibre Jute as an answer to offset climate change. We even developed stress-tolerant varieties of crops as our own response to climate change adaptation. We have constituted Climate Change fund with our own resources and so far spent about USD 400 million for implementing adaptation and mitigation programmes.

But, we now face a key question: will we be able to sustain the progress made? For Bangladesh and many others, there is a limit to adapt to climate change.

In past one decade, in Copenhagen, New York - Quebec - Isa-shima, I underlined to the world leaders the risks out of climate change. Evidences from Bangladesh and many other climate theatres show how millions of people are moving out of their ancestral lands because of river erosion, water stress, and saline water intrusion or arsenic contamination of groundwater.

Confronted with these, often a sense of hopelessness grips people. They find their resources depleting, capacity of coping reduced and so little capabilities or support around.

These environmental vulnerabilities can profoundly endanger social instability and cohesion within and among communities.

Many ask me about the threat of climatic stress. I am less concerned about typical 'wars'. To me, the geometry of climatic stress may simmer tensions and stress, and spark different forms of conflicts among people and communities.

Excellencies,

World Economic Forum has identified climate change as the top-most risk for the global business and industry. They also find that "failure in climate change mitigation and adaptation – water crises – natural disasters" will impact business and industry worldwide.

Only last week, British Met Office released its prediction that the decade of 2014 to 2023 will be the warmest decade in 150 years!

So, let there be no doubt that that environmental vulnerabilities only lead to fragile economy and jeopardise human security.

Let me also say that we have enormous amount of science – technology – innovation – finance at our disposal to address climate change. We only need the 'will' of the richer segments of societies – everywhere – to act ambitiously against climate change. We need to 'transform' our lifestyles, attitudes, systems, economies. Back in 2012, I pledged in New York that Bangladesh will pursue a low-carbon development pathway as our commitment to 'collective good' of tackling climate change.

And, if anyone in this room and beyond has slightest doubt on climate change, please come down to Bangladesh. I am ready to walk with you showing climate change impacts.

Thank you all, again.