

**SOUTH ASIAN SPEAKER'S SUMMIT ON
ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)
CLOSING SESSION**

Speech by
Her Excellency **Sheikh Hasina**
Honorable Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel, Dhaka, Sunday, 18 Magh 1422, 31 January 2016

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

President of IPU and Chair of the Session Mr. Saber Hossain Chowdhury,
His Excellency Thilanga Sumathipala, Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Sri Lanka,
His Excellency Abdul Raouf Ibrahim, Speaker of the House of the People (Wolesi Jirga),
Afghanistan,
His Excellency Jigme Zangpo, Speaker of the National Assembly (Tshogdu), Bhutan
His Excellency Abvdulla Maseeh Mohamed, Speaker of the Majlis, the Maldives
Her Excellency Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Honorable Speaker of Parliament (Jatiya Sangsad),
Bangladesh
Her Excellency Sumitra Mahajan, Speaker of the House of the People (Lok Sabha), India
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen.

Assalamu Alaikum and very good afternoon to all of you.

It is my pleasure to be with you and welcome you all to the Closing Session of the first ever South Asian Speakers' Summit on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At first, I want to congratulate Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) for organizing this event, Bangladesh National Parliament for hosting it and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids for providing technical support and cooperation.

Now let me congratulate to all of you, for adopting DHAKA DECLARATION of South Asian Speaker's Summit on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. I personally and my government as a whole do hereby fully endorse the declaration and commitments made by you, the Honorable Speakers of participating countries.

I sincerely appreciate you for highlighting the importance of regional collaboration, partnership, governance, inclusion, participation, rights and security for the achievement of sustainable development goals in our South Asian countries.

Honorable Speakers, ladies and gentlemen,

You are aware that Bangladesh has met with tremendous successes in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It has reduced extreme poverty by half. We have created improved access to basic education, health services, and water and sanitation facilities for both urban and rural areas.

During the last seven year, our GDP grew at over 6% despite global slowdown. Over the past decade, our exports grew by more than 3 times; remittance flow increased nearly 3 times; foreign exchange reserve has risen around 8 times.

Last year, Bangladesh graduated to the World Bank's loser-middle income status. We are now on course to become a Middle Income Country by 2021.

Honorable Speakers, ladies and gentlemen,

We adopted our ambitious Agenda 2030. We want to sustain the momentum of the MDGs, build on their successes and transform Bangladesh to realize the SDGs, leveraging the

conducive environment for its implementation through global partnership, both bi-laterally and multi-laterally.

I believe Agenda 2030 is about a collective journey. Therefore, the international community has to deliver on the means of implementation. We will need scaled-up resources from all sources- public and private, domestic and international, Thus, fulfillment of the ODA Targets will be crucial, from the beginning.

Honorable Speakers, ladies and gentlemen,

As a key institution of democracy, Parliaments have an important role to play to make the SDGs a success. Practical steps need to be taken to advance the integration of the Goals at the national level and to monitor progress.

I pledge to build political will in our South-Asian Parliaments in order to implement the SDGs through partnership, dialogue and cooperation with key stakeholders, including citizens (men and women), civil society, community and religious leaders, and young people.

With this urge upon Speakers and parliamentarians for allocating budget that will enable our countries to implement fully the SDGs.

Honorable Speakers, ladies and gentlemen,

I fully recognize the interdependence between health and development. So, I firmly believe that parliaments in our regions and beyond must increase their efforts in both quantitative and qualitative terms to ensure healthy lives as propounded in SDG-3, by tackling the growing burden of tobacco related diseases in particular and non-communicable diseases in general, seemingly pervasive in our countries.

Strengthening our implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) is an important step in this direction, the implementation of which to reach SDGs having 17 goals and 169 targets is a pre-condition for the developing countries, like ours.

I believe FCTC implementation is mostly imperative for two specific reasons – number one, without FCTC reaching the third goal of SDG 'Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages' is impossible, and number two, tobacco is also a hindrance to reach the other SDGs.

Honorable Speakers, ladies and gentlemen,

Tobacco is now an epidemic. In South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Myanmar and Sri Lanka) the estimated total number of tobacco users is 384 million, which accounts for over a third (34.8%) of the total tobacco users in the world (about 1.1 billion).

The economic and health costs of tobacco use in all of these countries are staggering. In India and Bangladesh alone, tobacco kills over 1.1 million people annually based on conservative estimates.

Honorable Speakers, ladies and gentlemen,

Our government firmly believes that public health is on top. Considering this, we have amended the smoking and tobacco product usage (control) Act in 2013 and passed associated Rules in 2015 as part of FCTC implementation,

Now we are focusing on law implementation to reaping benefits of the law. Following the 2013 Act and Rules 2015, we are also going to introduce pictorial health warning on tobacco packs from 19 March 2016.

I know our neighboring countries – India, Nepal and Sri Lanka have already introduced it. We also introduced 1% health development surcharge on tobacco since the financial year 2014-15 for the first in Bangladesh to protect public health and promote tobacco control activities.

In order to strengthen tobacco control activities in a coordinated manner, my government has established National Tobacco Control Cell (NTCC) under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).

As part of national preparation, our Planning Commission has recently adopted the 7th Five Year Plan (2016-2020) aligning with the new global Agenda where the issue of taking tobacco related burden has been addressed.

Apart from these, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is now drafting two important policies; one is Tobacco Cultivation Control Policy to check its aggressive expansion and threat to food security; the other is a comprehensive National Tobacco Control Policy to reduce demand and supply of tobacco.

Honorable Speakers, ladies and gentlemen,

Although we have earned notable progress in tobacco control, we are not complacent, we still we have to do some more to fully comply with the FCTC and to reduce tobacco use substantially in Bangladesh, making our beloved country tobacco free by 2040. For realizing this coveted vision we will;

- Come up with a countrywide National Tobacco Control Program using the fund generated from health development surcharge, at the first step.
- At the second step, we will take measures for adopting a strong tobacco tax policy simplifying the current tobacco tax structure aiming at decrease in affordability of all tobacco products in the country and at the same time increasing the revenue base of the government, taking lessons from best practices in the region.
- And above all, my government will take all possible measures for effective implementation of existing tobacco control laws and in turn we will make our laws fully complaint with FCTC in line with our national priorities to achieve SDGs.

Honorable Speakers, ladies and gentlemen,

We have set our vision 2021 to emerge as a Middle Income, knowledge-driven digital economy. Then comes our Vision 2041 to be a developed one. These are to realize the dream of our Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, to build a Sonar Bangla, the land of Golden Bengal.

As we have surprised the world with our MDG achievements, we are now encouraged and committed to taking a lead role by setting examples again in case of SDG's.

In our journey, no one will be left behind as we aspire to build a just, progressive, peaceful and prosperous Bangladesh.

Let us commit our will and wealth – for our present and future.

With these few words, I wish you all a happy journey towards achieving the SDG's in your respective countries under the sagacious mentoring of the parliamentarians with the leadership of Honorable Speakers of the region.

Thank you all again.

Khoda Hafez.
Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.

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