

Statement

By

His Excellency Mr. M. Morshed Khan, M.P

Hon'ble Foreign Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

at

the Plenary of the 59th Session of the UN General

Assembly

Mr. President,

I congratulate you most warmly on your well-deserved election. I am confident you will build upon the excellent work done by your predecessor, President Julian Robert Hunte and lead us to a successful outcome. Special tribute is due to our Secretary General Kofi Annan for his dedicated leadership.

Three decades ago, Bangladesh joined the United Nations as its 136th Member. Our support to its purposes and principles has been unswerving. Indeed, it is a Constitutional commitment. We believe that the UN provides an essential political and diplomatic framework for actions of all its members including the most powerful. Bangladesh has refused to be drawn into the debate over the relevance of the UN. International law and legitimacy cannot be anything but relevant. Use of force without the authorization of the UN Security Council cannot render the UN meaningless. The events in Iraq vindicates this. We laud the UN for its strong advocacy against unilateralism in the interest of a just global order. Our spontaneous endorsement of such principle is in conformity with the fundamentals of our foreign policy.

The United Nations is not only a system for providing collective security. It is a comprehensive international network of systems. It deals with the work of myriad Specialized Agencies, with establishing norms, standards, codes and guidelines and buttressing the rule of law and rights of individuals. It embraces the world's trading, financial and monetary systems and promotes the cause of development. In our globalized world there is no substitute for the UN. It is the only forum that can deal with the cooperative management of problems that recognize no frontiers.

The 30th Anniversary of our admission to the UN this year , marks a major milestone of our partnership with the UN. It is a sobering moment as much as one for rejoicing. For it is a record of our progress as a sovereign independent State. From the very outset Bangladesh pursued two pre-eminent objectives - strengthening responsibility at home and enhancing our contribution abroad. Our relationship with the UN has been mutually rewarding in promoting peace and advancing development.

Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman laid the foundations of our national development in the late 1970s. His philosophy embraced reinforcing democracy with development. Our achievements are largely due to this pursuit. It reflected our commitment to human rights, good governance and the empowerment of the poor, especially women. Innovative ideas flowing from our own intellectual resources were harnessed with the cooperation and support of our development partners and the UN system. Our efforts were backed by a free press and a vibrant civil society. The outcome was positive. It was to invoke what the World Bank described as a '**silent revolution.**' We are aware, that much more remains to be done. However, our commitment to improving visibly the quality of life of our people remains uncompromising.

Natural disasters have often proved to be impediments to our development. The excessive flooding , this year is a case in point. Two-thirds of the country came under water, and many lives were lost. Over two million people became homeless and infrastructure sustained severe damage. Better preparedness, prevented greater losses. The courage and resilience of the Bangladeshi people in facing the situation were indeed remarkable. We deeply appreciate the support and solidarity that we received from the

international community at this time. The peculiarities of our geography render flooding a seasonal occurrence. It is therefore, imperative that we seek measures that will address this recurrent problem in a sustained and enduring manner through proper management of the water resources in the region. In the final analysis, it is the long term rehabilitation and reconstruction measure that also require international support.

Despite these occasional setbacks, we in Bangladesh can point to progress in a number of important social and economic fields. Poverty reduction has been a central goal. We have reduced population growth by half, curbed child mortality by a third, achieved food self-sufficiency, improved sanitation standards with homegrown methods, and reduced ozone depleting substances and vehicular pollution. Education has remained a major thrust of our government's policy. Our school enrolment rates are among the highest in the developing world, particularly for girls. Free schooling for girl children, gender mainstreaming, and empowerment of women have helped create a vibrant and progressive society.

We have used external assistance appropriately, and because of accountable democratic institutions, the emergence of a powerful middle class, and the presence of vigilant civil groups we have been able to create a paradigm where achievements have been lasting. Ideas like micro-credit and non-formal education have made famous beginnings in Bangladesh.

We would be happy to share our experience with other comparable societies. The UN can be an effective conduit for that. We encourage the UN in its role as a locator, collator and transmitter of best practices. This is how the UN can really help developing countries by passing the litmus test of relevance not in drafts and declarations, but in operations and implementation.

The past decade has witnessed many important UN Conferences focused on our critical aspirations. The leaders have agreed on the Millennium Development Goals. We believe the MDGs provide the best hope for the world's poor. The success of these goals would however, largely depend on an enabling international economic environment particularly, in areas of trade, finance, ODA and technology transfer. When we review the progress next year, I am afraid our assessment in these regards, may be sobering. Words must be translated into deeds and commitments made must be kept for us to progress.

Extreme poverty is a gross denial of human rights. The disturbing experiences, including rise in senseless terrorism warn us that failure in development is not an option, that poverty can breed extremism, that to rid the world of its tragic consequences effectively, its root causes must be addressed.

In today's world, trade remains a crucial vanguard for development. Our active participation in the WTO and UNCTAD conforms to this maxim. Unhindered market access and special and preferential treatment to products of developing countries should be at the heart of multilateral negotiations. Managed migration is an important phenomena. However, the root causes of cross- border migratory flows need to be addressed in right earnest . Greater focus must be directed to the full implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the LDCs. The goals of Johannesburg Plan and

Monterrey consensus should be pursued with determination. While it is important to set targets, it may be more important to create the means to achieve them.

For the cause of development to progress we need an environment of peace worldwide. Sadly, in many parts of the world this is lacking. We are concerned with the persistent violence in Iraq. We are encouraged by the return of the UN to the scene. We would now expect the UN to play a central role in facilitating the democratic process and also in the reconstruction and humanitarian work in the country. In Afghanistan holding of a successful election next month, will be critical to the country's stability. Our people cherish their close bonds with the peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan and we pray that their travails will be over soon. A core issue in the Middle East remains the unresolved problem of Palestine. The Palestinians have suffered far too much for far too long, and the Wall now only exacerbates it. Perhaps, there can be a two-State solution on the basis of pre-1967 borders with an independent Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital. Till that is achieved there must be respect for international law, and all peoples in the region must be able to live in peace and security, free from violence, destruction and acts of terror.

Mr. President,

Wherever it has been possible, Bangladesh has not fought shy of contributing to post-conflict stability. We have always done this under the aegis of the United Nations. In UN peacekeeping, we are among the top in the list of participating countries in this regard. Over the past 20 years we have been involved in 28 Peacekeeping operations across 4 continents. Currently we are participating in 12 missions out of 16 ongoing UN missions. We have done so because we see this as advancing our role and perception as a constructive and stabilizing international actor. We also want to spread across the troubled parts of the world the lesson and axiom we have derived from our own experience. It is simply that for development to take place, conflicts must first cease.

Mr. President,

We believe that there is a direct relationship between disarmament and development. Bangladesh is party to all major international Conventions and Treaties on disarmament. We have denounced all weapons of mass destruction. Our geographical location makes nuclear weapons a direct and legitimate cause for concern for us in the South Asia region. Bangladesh therefore, supports all measures partial and otherwise towards arms control, conventional and nuclear disarmament.

Bangladesh has condemned international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We remain an active coalition partner in the war against terrorism. As party to several conventions on combating terrorism adopted both at regional and international levels , we are pledge bound to their effective implementation .

Mr. President,

Bangladesh has been playing an active role in many important Committees and Commissions of the United Nations. We believe the reforms of the General Assembly, and of the Security Council, currently being discussed, can truly help reenergize the system, and enable these institutions to reflect the realities of the contemporary world.

Consultations should be broad-based and should not be guided by perceived interests of a few. Bangladesh believes that any increase in the membership of the Council should be based on certain criteria which includes, the respect for the principle of equitable geographical distribution and the aspirant's contribution to international peace and security; its proven track-records in democracy; its compliance with the UN resolutions; its avowed commitment to nuclear disarmament and its profile as a major partner in development; its contribution as voice of the economically disadvantaged countries.

Bangladesh believes, that the ultimate focus of any reform exercise should be on enhancing the Council's credibility and democratic profile through its working methods, its decision making processes and the very substance of its deliberations and not merely creation of new centres of privilege. In this regard, the Report of the High level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Changes which is expected to be available in December, this year will provide scope and opportunity for further deliberations.

Mr. President,

The quest for world order must begin at our own doorstep. Bangladesh is committed to maintain the credibility of SAARC, to provide its socio-economic mandate, to reduce tension and create a broad-based climate of confidence building. Bangladesh will takeover the chairmanship of the thirteenth SAARC Summit in January, next year. The occasion will mark the 20th anniversary of SAARC. We look forward to celebrate the occasion with due solemnity as well as maintain positive forward momentum. A key thrust is to promote a regional focus on specific projects and to explore progress in freeing-trade, enhancing investment, strengthening infrastructure, transport connectivity, energy grid, ITC, bio-technology, capital market cooperation and combating terrorism etc. Our overarching commitment of course, remains poverty alleviation. All in all, we aspire to expand our collective agenda of peace, progress and development in South Asia as well as to seek links with sub-regional and regional groups in South East Asia.

Mr. President,

I firmly believe that nations big and small, weak and powerful all need the UN, as much as the UN needs them. It is only by combining our endeavours, and uniting our resolve that we will be able to achieve our objectives of peace, security, development and stability.

Mr. President,

The power of humanity does not lie in the size of its armies but rather in the strength of its ideas, not in its ability to destroy but in its capacity to build, not in its tendencies to despair, but in its propensities to hope. Our ability to tap this power for our own benefit will shape our future in these-times, marked by difficulties, and also possibilities.

I thank you