

'No compromise on terrorism'

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Bangladesh is “unwavering” in its commitment to rooting out terrorism and fighting the use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists, the foreign minister has said.

Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali on Monday said his government’s unshakable stand against terrorism was “the greatest strength” helping Bangladesh to contribute to regional and global peace and security.

Ali said this at the inauguration of a workshop on the UN Security Council Resolution 1540, adopted in 2004, proposing legally binding measures against the use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists.

Bangladesh’s national committee, chaired by the foreign secretary, organised the workshop jointly with the New York-based 1540 Experts Committee of the Resolution and the Kathmandu-based UN Regional

Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia.

The foreign minister said Bangladesh was “deeply committed” to the full resolution’s full implementation, saying “we unequivocally support all international efforts at promoting a more peaceful and safer world”.

He said this commitment was derived from the country’s Constitution.

He said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had always strongly campaigned for “complete elimination of all weapons of mass destruction”, and upheld her own foreign policy conviction — disarmament for development and a nuclear-weapons free and terrorism-free South Asia”.

He said the Awami League-led government had taken “a number of bold, pragmatic, and concrete steps” to eradicate terrorism, snap its finance routes, and halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and small arms.

“We have maintained zero-tolerance towards terrorists to ensure Bangladesh territory is not used by them against the interest of our neighbouring countries, thereby making our region safer and more secure,” he said.

He said Resolution 1540 and the series of subsequent follow-up resolutions were “watershed achievements”.

“These resolutions demonstrate the determination of the UN Membership to pursue comprehensive efforts to address the nexus between WMD and terrorism and to close the gap in international law regarding non-state actors and WMDs”.

He said Bangladesh was aware of the legally binding obligations under the resolution.

“We remain conscious of our national actions that need to be further strengthened under Resolution 1540, especially in implementing appropriate national measures.”

Among the things that he felt needed shoring-up were national criminal laws and penal processes, national plans of action, export controls, border vigil, law enforcement, physical security and nuclear material accounting techniques.

He said Bangladesh had already “fulfilled its obligations of submitting two reports on its national implementation of UNSCR 1540 to the 1540 Experts Committee”.

He, however, added: “It is not surprising that as a developing country we may have some gaps in our legal, regulatory and national coordination infrastructure, and deficiencies in our agency-wide capacity and experiences to fulfil every provisions of Resolution 1540.”

He said the two-day workshop, ending on Tuesday, would discuss, identify and address the gaps and factors that “impede Bangladesh from fulfilling its obligations to the fullest under the terms of the resolution”.

He, however, sought continued support of the international community, including the UN.

Zawar Haider Abidi, an expert of the Committee Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1540, welcomed Bangladesh’s move to organise the workshop on the eve of its 10th anniversary.

He said Bangladesh is the “first country in the region and beyond” that invited 1540 resolution expert team for the workshop.

Foreign Secretary M Shahidul Haque, who chairs the Bangladesh committee, said development would founder without peace and stability.

He said Bangladesh witnessed an economic slowdown during phase of violence before Jan 5 elections.

Director General (UN) at Foreign Ministry Saida Muna Tasneem said the workshop was being organised under the aegis of Bangladesh’s National Committee on UN Security Council Resolutions formed in Oct 2012.

Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division Lieutenant General Abu Belal Muhammad Shafiul Huq, who is also the Chair of the National Authority for the Chemical Weapons Convention, also spoke at the inauguration.