



General Debate of the 60th Session of the UNGA

Speech

By

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Mr. President,

Congratulations on your election. I am confident you will carry forward the able legacy left by your predecessor Mr. Jean Ping. Our warm tribute is also due to the Secretary-General as he strives to reinvigorate our organisation.

We meet in the wake of the high-level plenary where bold decisions were made to promote implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Our problems transcend national boundaries. Solutions need a global consensus. All of us must emphatically reaffirm the UN's central role in the cooperative management of the world's problems.

We are Constitutionally committed to uphold the UN Charter and its legitimacy based on the rule of law. In a globalising world, no nation is an island. None can prosper alone. The UN remains the only bastion of peace, justice and development in the world.

Mr. President,

Reform of the UN is vital. We must focus on its effectiveness and ability to deliver quickly. Its agenda and mandate must be meaningful. Its administration should be reformed. Its budget deserves to be shorn of waste. Its major organs need to be reconstituted and revitalised to serve purposeful priorities. Expansion of its major organs is necessary but it must be tailored to the efficacy of the organisation.

The dynamics of today's world have been pushed by immense forces of change. Amongst them are advances in science and technology and mass awareness of individual rights. The resulting globalisation and progression in humanitarian law have seen a world where the very concept of sovereignty is being challenged; where the dimensions of security are in a flux; where the

nature of conflict has seen a seismic shift and where social exclusion has added a complex uncertainty. The need for constructive engagement, dialogue, tolerance and understanding is imperative. Development and rule of law must take the centre stage.

New challenges confront us today. While terrorists sow panic and xenophobia in our societies, deprivation, hunger, disease, and environmental degradation continue to fuel insecurity and destabilisation. The recent bombings in London and Egypt have shocked us all. It has hardened our resolve to face this menace unitedly. Bangladesh condemns terrorism in all its forms. We have acceded to all anti-terrorism conventions of the UN and relevant regional organisations. We support the early conclusion of a comprehensive UN Convention. I would like to underscore our conviction that terrorists do not belong to any one country or religion.

Mr. President,

In Bangladesh, sustained efforts are being made to pursue the twin objectives of responsibility at home and contribution abroad. Despite huge constraints, we have made good progress to advance democracy, development and human rights. We recognise that these goals are linked with one another.

We have moved slowly but surely to shore up a democratic ethos. Late President Ziaur Rahman led Bangladesh out of the morass of a failed democracy in 1975. He inducted a multi-party system, freeing the press and opening up the economy. In 1990, a popular upsurge against an entrenched military dictatorship ushered in the first real push towards sustained democracy. We have not looked back. Three consecutive free and fair

elections were held under a neutral caretaker government. This unique Constitutional innovation has ensured a peaceful transfer of power in alternating modes. Democracy has taken firm roots in Bangladesh. A key element of the last 2001 election was a voter turnout of over 70 percent of the electorate. Women outnumbered men. They voted not for symbols but issues.

A quiet revolution is underway in Bangladesh in the field of development. This is visible in six key fronts—achieving stable GDP growth of 5 percent or more for over two decades; raising per capita income, maintaining food security; increasing resilience to meet natural disasters, improving human development index and attaining better social and health outcomes. Our performance in these areas compares favourably in our own region and beyond. A set of pragmatic and targeted policy approaches have made this progress possible. We have completed a full-fledged Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper through a protracted consultative process. It outlines a road-map to meet country-specific MDGs. The fundamental principle of the PRSP is to promote employment-generating economic growth and to significantly invest in thrust sectors such as education, health and social safety-net programmes. It is a matter of some satisfaction that Bangladesh has achieved two of the MDGs—eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary schools and access to safe drinking water. We are close to achieving two other goals, namely, reduction of income poverty and under-five child mortality rates.

Bangladesh is committed to uphold the dignity of individuals and promote human rights. Bangladesh is a party to all UN Human Rights

Conventions. We are moving steadily to strengthen good governance through strong democratic institutions, establish rule of law and eliminate intolerance from the society.

Mr. President,

Poverty remains deeply entrenched in pockets around the world. The most vulnerable are the LDCs. Their products should be accorded immediate duty-free and quota-free global access. As reiterated in Monterrey, specific allocation of 0.15 to 0.20 percent of the developed countries' GDP must be earmarked for the LDCs as ODA. Financing for development is a critical issue. Innovative initiatives that have been mooted in this regard need to be pursued in earnest.

The devastation caused by natural disasters affects all countries—rich and poor alike. How to meet the challenge of effective relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction as well as pre-disaster warning and preparations? This remains a continuing charge on the UN.

We are profoundly shocked at the huge toll taken by Hurricane Katrina in the gulf coast of the United States. Natural disasters do not distinguish between rich and poor countries and miseries and sufferings caused to human life are the same. We in Bangladesh have weathered many severe floods and cyclones and the toll in terms of life and property has been huge. We can, therefore, feel the torment that the affected people have undergone and we offer our heartfelt sympathies. We know that the American people can overcome the disaster and move on with their lives.

All countries including Bangladesh must look to ways and means to contribute effectively to the United Nations, be it through peace-making,

peace-keeping or peace-building. Active participation, innovative ideas and best practices in shoring up development can together enhance our combined capacity to address the world's problems, especially those that no one country can tackle alone. We in Bangladesh are particularly proud of our contribution to peace-keeping on many simultaneous fronts across the globe. In all, our troops have exceeded 39,000 in 24 missions and we are currently among the largest contributors. 67 of our soldiers have died in this cause as blue helmets. Our commitment to peace-keeping remains unflinching. We also fully support the establishment of the UN Peace Building Commission.

Mr. President,

A priority concern for us is our close identity with Africa. Special bonds of friendship have been established through our peace-keeping efforts. The example of NEPAD is particularly encouraging. We believe that South-South Cooperation has specific relevance in this context.

Bangladesh reiterates her support for early establishment of a sovereign independent State in Palestine in accordance with relevant UN resolutions. The Road Map for Peace in the Middle East needs to be implemented fully and urgently. In Iraq, we believe that the present situation should be resolved by preserving the interests of the Iraqi people, especially their territorial integrity and ensuring long-term peace, security and stability of the region.

Bangladesh's Constitutional commitment to general and complete disarmament has seen our progressive support of international and regional treaties and agreements covering all the ABCC weapons. We are party to the NPT and CTBT. Our adherence remains geared to human rather than weapons security.

Mr. President,

Each year we come to this august Assembly to reaffirm our faith in the UN. This 60th anniversary year holds profound significance. We must provide a renewed mandate to the UN to meet the challenges of the new millennium - to rid the world of poverty and injustice, to usher in the rule of law, to promote the cause of development, to eradicate terrorism and above all promote peace and security. We can only prevail if we act responsibly and together. Support for the UN and its legitimacy remains a paramount priority.

I thank you all.

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