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**Statement by
His Excellency Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed, Hon'ble Chief Adviser (Prime Minister),
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh at the High-level Meeting of
the General Assembly on Africa's development needs
22 September 2008, New York**

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

The challenges that Africa faces today are truly daunting, including poverty, hunger, malnutrition, deadly disease, and the search for lasting peace and security. The current global food crisis, irreversible climate change, soaring energy prices and volatility in international financial markets are only making it harder for many African countries. Their hard-won progress in curbing hunger and malnutrition is facing new threats.

Africa has immense potential, something I have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand while living in Kenya for five years, during which I traveled to many regions of the continent. Africa is endowed with vast human and natural resources. By adopting NEPAD, African countries have put the Internationally Agreed Development Goals at the centre of their development agendas. The Peer Review Mechanism manifests their unswerving commitment to good governance. Africa today is afflicted by far fewer armed conflicts than it was a decade ago. As Africa marches ahead to address its own challenges, we have a moral responsibility to extend our full cooperation to the African countries. International cooperation in the forms of aid, trade, debt relief, investment, technology transfer and capacity building will remain crucial for transforming the continent.

Trade is critically important for this region. The international community should correct the trade distortion and expand African countries' access to developed country markets, which is imperative to support their economic development. We call upon major economies to conclude the Doha negotiation immediately with full implementation of its development agenda bearing in mind the special concerns of the African countries and the LDCs. We are also hopeful that the New Partnership for Development Act (NPDA), as considered in the US Congress, will pave the way for duty-free market access to the US market for all products from all LDCs. Bangladesh would like to work closely with African LDCs to ensure that this initiative is truly non-discriminatory and pro-development.

Distinguished Co-chairs:

The external debt situation remains a source of serious concern for Sub-Saharan Africa and the LDCs. We note with satisfaction that there has been some progress in Sub-Saharan African countries as their debt to GDP ratio has reduced over the years. However, the current debt relief initiative has been slow and inadequate, particularly for non-HIPC countries. There is an urgent need to ensure that all creditors, especially private creditors, fulfill their burden-sharing obligations.

We are deeply concerned that, since 2005, the ODA-GNI ratio for developed countries has declined from 0.33 per cent to 0.28 per cent. It falls far short of the G-8 Gleneagles pledge in 2005 to double aid to Africa by 2010. Conditionality, unpredictability and earmarking of ODA are further key impediments in ensuring aid effectiveness. ODA to infrastructure and productive sectors are important to stimulate growth, generate employment and reduce poverty. OECD countries will need to substantially increase their ODA to deliver on the commitment made at the G-8 summit at Gleneagles.

Development partners and the international community should also take steps to help Africa integrate into the global economy through foreign direct investment. The continent is the only region in the world that has not benefited from a Green Revolution. As a result, yields have stagnated in recent decades, leading to a fall in per capita food availability since the 1970s. Yet, proven and cost-effective technologies exist today to launch an African Green Revolution that could double yields for smallholder farmers in a relatively short period of time.

Distinguished Co-chairs,

Bangladesh has been an active and ardent proponent of peace and development for Africa. There has hardly been a UN peacekeeping mission in Africa in the last two and half decades in which Bangladesh did not participate. Currently around 10,000 Bangladeshis are working in 12 UN peacekeeping missions. We send our peacekeepers even to the highest risk areas. We do so in line with our deep commitment to the UN Charter and in the spirit of solidarity with our African brethren. Our blue-helmet soldiers have been working shoulder-to-shoulder with our brothers in Africa in restoring peace in this region.

As a member of the organizational committee of the Peacebuilding Commission, Bangladesh is actively engaged in supporting the ongoing development efforts in Burundi and Sierra Leone. I would like to reiterate the Bangladesh Government's firm commitment to further strengthening of our support and cooperation for the development of Africa.

In development, as in peace, Bangladesh walks with fellow African nations—as a member of the Group of 77, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The Brussels Declaration and Programme of Action for the LDCs outline a set of actions by the global community to address the socio-economic challenges facing the 49 most impoverished countries, 33 of which are in Africa. Fulfillment of the Commitments of the Programme of Action will go a long way to addressing Africa's problems.

Within the framework of South-South cooperation, countries like Bangladesh can meaningfully contribute to Africa's sustainable development. Over the years, Bangladesh has successfully adopted a number of innovative ideas to development like microcredit, non-formal education and women's empowerment. Microcredit has now been replicated in around 100 countries, including many in Africa. BRAC – one of our largest NGOs – already has a presence in Africa. We remain ready to share our experiences in all these areas with African nations. Despite the vicissitudes of nature, we in Bangladesh have succeeded in outpacing our huge population growth generally with agricultural productivity. Bangladesh is willing to share her Green Revolution experiences with fellow LDCs, especially those in Africa. We must remain comrades in our quest for peace, development and prosperity.

Thank you.