



# Bangladesh

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## Statement

By

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Honorable Chief Adviser

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

At

**Thematic Plenary I - Adaptation**

The challenge of adaptation – from vulnerability to resilience

**High-level Event on Climate Change**

**New York**

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**Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Bangladesh congratulates the Secretary General for leading the effort to address climate change issues with renewed urgency. The high-level gathering this morning demonstrates that we are collectively and unswervingly determined to address the acute threat posed by climate change. Climate change must be addressed now, - and it must be addressed decisively. The price of inaction would be too high.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Today we are confronted with the difficult reality that the phenomenon of climate change is not a myth, and that its impacts are no more a conjecture. I speak for Bangladesh and many others who are on the threshold of a climatic Armageddon, foretold by increasingly violent and unpredictable weather patterns. Devastating floods, cyclones, droughts and storm surges are now recurring with relentless regularity. Climate change is fundamentally altering our lives, for example by impeding our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. This is especially so for the Least Developed Countries, which can ill-afford to absorb the impact of climate change.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Bangladesh is particularly vulnerable to climate change given its location. As a low-lying delta in one of the highest rainfall areas of the world, Bangladesh is chronically prone to inundation. This year, we have witnessed one of the worst floods in recent times, as more than one third of the country was inundated. In the face of such a deluge, there is little we can do to prevent significant damage. Even relief operations are difficult to carry out until the

flood waters recede. It is imperative that we address the factors that exacerbate flooding in low-lying countries like Bangladesh. Deforestation, inadequate carbon sequestration, soil erosion, global warming - all of these are part of the growing menace that is climate change.

There is growing concern that an irreversible climatic shift will displace millions of people worldwide. By some estimates, a one meter sea-level rise will submerge about one-third of the total area of Bangladesh, thereby uprooting 25-30 million of our people. We must take into account two important factors here - that the sea-level rise is an inevitable reality on our current trajectory and that the people who will be affected are the least able to cope with the consequences. They are most likely to become refugees of climate change. We cannot afford to remain idle until this misfortune actually unfolds. The time to act cannot be delayed. The very first step is to recognize the responsibility of all nations towards the refugees of climate change. In particular, the post-Kyoto regime should ensure that such refugees are granted the legal rights required to provide for their recovery and rehabilitation.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Scientists have long warned us that a 'business as usual' approach will not reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Drastic measures are now required. Unless we stem the tide of emissions, the increase in global temperatures and sea levels may accelerate. Delay will mean greater risks and higher costs. An effective response to climate change challenges must strike a balance between mitigation and adaptation. We urge all major emitters to collectively establish and implement a global target to stabilize the atmosphere over the short, medium and long term. The principle of common but differentiated

responsibilities must be upheld. Enlightened self-interest must guide us towards an equitable, yet effective, emission regime.

There should also be renewed efforts to promote 'carbon-neutral' economic growth. For this, developed economies must commit to transferring environment-friendly technologies at preferential terms. Developing countries, especially the LDCs, cannot afford to bear the full cost of technological up-gradation of their economies. Our efforts to address climate change should not disproportionately tax the poorer nations. The post-Kyoto regime must generate new funds to facilitate development of technologies for a carbon neutral future in a scale that matches evolving requirements. It must also ensure transfer of these technologies to countries like Bangladesh to help secure their energy requirements.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Adaptation is necessary to cope with the unavoidable dimensions of climate change, and is essential in ameliorating near-term threats. Adequate physical, economic and institutional capacities can reduce the vulnerability of high-risk communities and groups. Access to appropriate adaptation technologies and know-how at affordable terms is critical. There is growing consensus that adaptation is cost-effective. Comprehensive adaptation can help many communities to minimize economic losses induced by natural disasters.

Adaptation to climate change, however, requires a long-term perspective. It needs investment - human and capital. Without sufficient and targeted funding, it may end up as empty rhetoric. The provisions and mechanisms in the existing framework have failed to secure resources

required to finance the adaptation deficit. The resource pool - such as the LDC Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund - remain perennially inadequate. The Adaptation Fund created under Kyoto protocol is yet to operationalize.

Future framework should include specific commitments towards servicing the current and future adaptation needs and priorities of the most vulnerable economies. The resources required to meet adaptation costs should supplement the ODA that developed countries traditionally pledge for poverty alleviation and other social development. Further, we must commit to fast-tracking climate funding, often at short notice. We must also uphold the principle of equity to ensure that the most vulnerable countries, with a larger proportion of their populations at risk, receive proportionately higher amounts of resources earmarked for adaptation. Our denominator should be the number of people likely to be affected by climate change, for resource allocation must take a people-oriented approach. We should also strive to simplify allocation and disbursement procedures.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Bangladesh has undertaken a number of measures to facilitate adaptation. Our National Water Management Plan (NWMP) takes into account climate change as a critical factor for future water supply and demand. It also factors in coastal erosion due to rising sea levels and the commensurate increase in tidal surges. We have developed a comprehensive framework to operationalize climate risk management and adaptation mainstreaming. There is, however, a strong need to address the challenges regionally and sub-regionally. Forecasting and early warning and sharing of

information can be very effective in reducing damages inflicted by natural calamities. We believe that a co-riparian approach to the management of regional waters will help Bangladesh and other regional countries to effectively manage soil erosion, flooding and other natural disasters.

At the regional level, we took up the issue of climate change at the Fourteenth SAARC Summit in Delhi this year. As you know, South Asia is the home to over one-fifth of the world population. A climatic disaster in the region is likely to push millions of our people to destitution. The South Asian heads of state and government have all rendered unequivocal support for an initiative to address this issue at the regional level. Our proposal to hold a regional dialogue on climate change received over-whelming support. Accordingly, we are hosting the first ever meeting of climate change experts in Dhaka in October 2007. This will enable us to reach a common position on climate change and adaptation issues prior to the Bali Conference later this year.

Lack of adequate infrastructure often undermines a country's adaptation efforts. This in turn can make a disaster hugely and horrifically costly. The international community must be mindful of these linkages. International support for adaptation must take into account infrastructural needs of affected countries, particularly in disaster management, agriculture, water resources and coastal zone management. We also believe that innovative financial instruments – such as weather derivatives - can help vulnerable communities reduce their coping costs. In the developed world, there are various weather-related financial products that help farmers and other vulnerable groups to hedge against uncertainty. We need to think of similar market-based solutions to insulate our poor farmers against weather-related risks. Bangladesh will

strongly welcome international initiatives to develop financial derivatives to cope with disasters and adaptation costs.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The world is more united than ever before in addressing the threats of climate change. Our environment is a global public good and we must work together to protect it. Time is of the essence, and unilateral action is not enough. We must turn our words into deeds, and pursue an aggressive strategy to address climate change. The post-Kyoto regime must incorporate concrete, realistic and legally binding emission and equitable reduction targets. We must also fully commit to meeting adaptation needs. The Bali Conference must take advantage of the goodwill expressed here to make a new beginning in this respect. Waiting any longer will be at our peril.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.

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