

Intervention by the Hon'ble Foreign Minister at the ACD Breakfast Meeting on the sideline of the 66th UNGA in New York on 20 September 2011 at 8-9 am at Millennium UN Plaza Hotel

Thank you, Mr. Chairman:

I wish to congratulate you (H.E. Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salim Al Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Kuwait) on receiving the new Chairmanship of Asia Cooperation Dialogue and thank you sincerely for hosting this breakfast meeting. I am sure, under your wise leadership, dialogue on key issues of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue would gain significant momentum today, which would substantially contribute to the success of the 10th ACD Ministerial Meeting to be held in Kuwait City on 10-11 October 2011. Let me also express my deep appreciation for Iran for its excellent work over the last one year, including the successful hosting of 9th Ministerial Meeting in Tehran.

Let me thank again Kuwait for outlining the theme, [the theme would be introduced during the NY meeting] of the 10th ACD Ministerial Meeting. Recently, we the Asian countries, like the rest of the world, were confronted with the global financial crisis and most of us successfully managed this challenge. We all need to work together in the spirit of Asian solidarity toward greater cooperation and integration to tackle this kind of challenges as well as other challenges such as food insecurity, climate change, widespread social inequality and poverty. We also need to work together to tackle extremism and terrorism for peace and tranquility of our Continent. The theme has been appropriate as it captures all these challenges facing us today.

In the last year, we worked towards achieving 'Asian Solidarity and Integrity: Promoting Peace, Prosperity and Justice'. Our effort was to make Asia a united and vibrant entity that is capable of speaking with one voice to the rest of the world. Through our persistent teamwork under the aegis of ACD, we wish to continue with this basic approach to the ultimate goal of Asian Community or Asian Union.

It appears more pragmatic to build Asian solidarity and integrity via a bottom-up approach. Enhanced trade, investment, networking, cultural & educational cooperation, tourism, people-to-people contact, disaster management, harmonization of standards, human development, etc can have a positive impact on the integration of people of the Asian countries, which will contribute tremendously to forging solidarity and integrity at the political level. In fact, moving forward by tapping the 'positives' among us is at the core of ACD. We have to achieve unity through exploiting the advantages of our diversity. We can build the lofty Asian tower, only if we work sincerely for the foundation at the ground level. We should not just cooperate but also coordinate and collaborate in meaningful and imaginative projects with definite goals of advancing peace, prosperity and justice at individual as well as at collective level.

Mr. Chairman,

The United Nations today (20 September 2011) is holding the high-level meeting on the theme “Addressing desertification, land degradation and drought in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication”. This reminds us of the fact that sustainable development remains elusive for many Asian countries. Despite sustained efforts to reduce endemic poverty, a significant portion of Asian population is living below the poverty line. We already completed more than a decade after the MDGs had been set. Rate of progress is, however, varied among the Asian countries. Bangladesh possesses rich experience in alleviating poverty. Our achievements like women empowerment, primary education, reduction of child mortality rate, non-formal education, etc have shown that lives and livelihoods of millions of poor can be changed and that such an improvement is sustainable. In recognition of good progress towards achieving MDGs, Bangladesh received MDG award from the United Nations during the last UNGA session. Bangladesh, as the prime mover for poverty alleviation, has a particular commitment to sharing best practices in the areas of poverty alleviation and attainment of MDGs. Bangladesh has plans to host an event on poverty alleviation in future.

Mr. Chairman,

As we look forward to the upcoming 10th Ministerial Meeting in Kuwait, we hope that we will be successful in contributing to building effective and cooperative response to the present-day challenges faced by the Asian countries such as social unrest, financial melt-down and natural disasters in an environment of climate change, and insecurity of food and energy. We may make earnest endeavour to forge a common Asian voice at the global level. Specifically, we might think of united positions in the forthcoming summits such as UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP17) in Durban on 28 November – 09 December 2011 and UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in Rio de Janeiro on 4-6 June 2012.

Mr. Chairman,

Future of the world belongs to Asia. Asia Cooperation Dialogue provides us the path to that future. Let us tread that path together.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.
