

# **The 68th Session of the UNGA**

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## **Address**

by

**Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina**

Hon'ble Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

The United Nations

New York

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## **Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim**

**Mr. President,**

**Assalamu Alaikum and Good Afternoon to you all.**

I congratulate you very warmly on your election as the President of the 68th Session of the General Assembly. I also congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremic for his able leadership as President of the 67th UNGA. I admire the Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his wisdom, bold initiatives and successes as Head of the United Nations.

**Mr. President,**

2. Rapid technological innovations are transforming our world. The changes involved are also creating new conflicts within and among the states. The most affected have been the vulnerable, the deprived and the disadvantaged. It reminds me of my father and the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's visionary call, in his first appearance before this Assembly 39 years ago, for a world order based on peace and justice, and a global economic arrangement to free the world of poverty, hunger and aggression. As his daughter, I am proud to have been among leaders adopting the Millennium Declaration in 2000, to be at the Review of the MDGs in 2010, and to be here now participating in the transition from MDGs to the post-2015 Development Agenda.

3. I hope this year's theme "the post-2015 Agenda: Setting the Stage" would help evolve a pragmatic strategy for the post-2015

development goals. The Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and the newly created High Level Political Forum are progressing well. Our experience would also be useful in overcoming the challenges to the MDGs within 2015, and in preparing the post-2015 development agenda.

4. Bangladesh has submitted to the United Nations, a draft of the post-2015 Development Agenda covering the socio-economic and the environmental goals and resources required for achieving them. We also held a Global Leadership Dialogue on population dynamics. The Dhaka Declaration placed human being at the center of all development agenda. It incorporated population growth, aging, urbanization and migration, among the priority issues. The meeting also felt strongly the need for mainstreaming migration in the post-2015 Development Agenda, particularly to accommodate the "climate migrants."

5. Our aim is to become a middle-income country and to realize our "Vision 2021", through setting up goals that match with the MDGs. We have already met or are on track to meet MDG-1, MDG-2, MDG-3, MDG-4, MDG-5, and MDG-6. Poverty has been reduced from 56.6% in 1991 to below 26%. In the last four and a half years, the average GDP growth rate remained at 6.4%; 50 million people have joined the middle income group; export earnings rose from US \$10.53 billion in 2006 to US \$27.03 billion now; remittances increased from US \$5 billion in 2006 to US \$14.5 billion; foreign currency reserve improved from US \$3.49 billion in 2006 to US \$16 billion; power production capacity have also increased from 3,200 MW in 2006 to 9,059 MW, to name a few indicators.

6. Thus, Bangladesh is often named as a "Model of Economic Development" and the "Standard Bearer of South Asia". Our achievements received a MDG Award; a South-South Award; the Global Diversity Award; and the FAO Food Award 2013. These recognitions were achieved largely due to the practice of the principles in the UN resolution on "People's Empowerment and Development Model" that I tabled and was adopted by the 66th UNGA. Using the "state of the art" digital technology, the people are today getting more than 200 services from 4,582 digitalized Union Services and Information Centers. Rural women are also getting health care services from digitally inter-connected 15,500 Community Health Clinics and Union Health Centers, which are reaching the health care services to the doorstep of the people. Advanced cell phone technologies are also providing services to over 100 million subscribers.

7. I believe real national development is achievable only through education. It is the main driving force for attaining peace and prosperity of a nation and for upholding justice, rule of law, democratic values and people's empowerment. Real development also demands empowerment of women and their equal participation with men in all walks of life. Our new Educational Policy provides girls with free education up to higher secondary school, monthly stipends to 11.90 million students of poor families and also free textbooks to all up to the secondary level. Our policies have also helped grow women leaders at the grass-root to the topmost level. In politics, so far 14,000 women are elected to the local government bodies and 70 to the Parliament. Five women are serving as Ministers and one as a Whip. Bangladesh is possibly the only nation today with women

occupying the position of the Prime Minister, the Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Deputy Leader, all at the same time. The reserved 10% of posts for women have succeeded many to reach high positions in the judicial, administrative, diplomatic and in the armed forces and law enforcing agencies.

8. Our policies of empowering the people, particularly the vulnerable, include social safety net programs; Vulnerable Group Feeding and Development; "Ashrayan" (Housing & Livelihood) for the homeless; monthly pensions for senior citizens, widows, destitute women, insolvent freedom fighters, the disabled, and maternity allowance for a total of 4.3 million people; food and nutrition security to 1.04 million rural people through "One House, One Farm" schemes, to name a few. The disadvantaged and the physically challenged are provided with education, skill development, and interest free loan for self employment. In the formal sector, one percent quota has been reserved for them. For those with autism and other developmental disorders, a resolution on "Autism Spectrum Disorder" was tabled by Bangladesh in the 67th UNGA. It had been adopted unifying us all in our quest to provide them their rightful place in the world.

9. Our progress in all spheres has, however, been sadly held back by climate change. Fraught with increasing natural disasters, Bangladesh faces a calamitous future due to global warming and sea level rise. It is estimated that 1 degree Celsius increase in temperature would lead to a meter rise of the sea level submerging a fifth of Bangladesh, and forcing 30 million "climate migrants" to move elsewhere, thereby, creating crisis of a huge magnitude within and

beyond our borders. I, therefore, reiterate the call that I had made at the 64th UNGA for a legal regime to ensure social, cultural, and economic rehabilitation of the climate migrants. I also call again for a fast track funding mechanism for the "Climate Change Fund" for LDCs to ensure sustained funding for the realization of our adaptation and mitigation action plans.

10. Bangladesh achieved independence in 1971 through monumental sacrifices. Our sacrifice began with bloodshed to preserve our mother tongue, Bangla on 21st February 1952. At my government's initiative, this sacrifice was immortalized in 1999 by UNESCO by its declaration of 21st February as International Mother Language Day. We have taken so far in this regard include, among others, establishment of the International Mother Language Institute in Dhaka. I thank the UN for introducing a Bangla website, a Radio program, and the UNDP for publishing its Asia Report in Bangla.

11. During our War of Liberation in 1971, Pakistani occupation forces in collaboration with their local cohorts perpetrated genocide, rape, arson and crimes against humanity. Over three million people sacrificed their lives and a quarter of a million women lost their honor to achieve independence. Therefore, since then, it was the ardent hope and aspiration of the nation to bring the perpetrators to justice. Accordingly, our Government constituted two War Crimes Tribunals under the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act of 1973 to try them. The trials are being held maintaining the highest standard of judicial practices. I urge the international community to support this trial process for the sake of justice, human rights and the rule of law.

Successful completion of the trial would heal the wounds of war and move Bangladesh on to the road of peace and progress.

12. The anti-liberation forces have always been working to destroy the secular nature of our nation. Under the direct patronage of the BNP-Jamaat Alliance Government from 2001 to 2006, they coalesced to form terrorist outfits, which began with bomb and grenade attacks killing people, especially the secular leaders and the Members of Parliament. On 21st August 2004, they made an attempt to assassinate me by lobbing 13 grenades on a public rally that I was addressing to protest the grenade attack on the British High Commissioner on May 21st 2004. In that attack, 24 people were killed and over 500 injured. Miraculously, I survived. As you are aware, earlier a more brutal attack was carried out on 15 August 1975, killing my father and the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and 18 members of my family. My younger sister Sheikh Rehana and I survived only because we were out of the country at that time. These gruesome attacks cemented my resolve to eliminate terrorism, and to adopt tough Anti-Terrorism and Anti-money Laundering Acts.

13. At home, our government is entrenching democracy to ideologically defeat terrorism and extremism. Our Commissions on Election, Anti-Corruption, Human Rights and Information have been strengthened. During our Government's tenure, the Election Commission has conducted 5,777 elections, electing 63,995 persons to the Parliament, city corporations, municipalities and other local bodies without receiving any complaint. Thus, the Election Commission has amply proven that it can hold free, fair and credible national elections. In respect to foreign affairs, we aim to cement

peace by resolving outstanding issues with our neighbors, increase cooperation with them through strengthening connectivity and maintain good relations with all countries of the world as per dictum, "Friendship towards all, malice towards none", of the Father of the Nation.

14. Our commitment to global peace is proven by our role as a top troop contributor in UN peacekeeping and Vice Chair of the UN Peace Building Commission. It is also reflected by our position on disarmament and the non-proliferation agenda. During my first term as the Prime Minister from 1996 to 2001, Bangladesh became the first among South Asian nations to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty. In the current term, I am happy to be again first in the region to be signing the Arms Trade Treaty, and acceding to the remaining CCW instruments in this year's Treaty Signing Event. Our role on world affairs is based on justice and democratic values, which assures international peace and security, and supports disarmament.

**Mr. President,**

15. Promotion of cultural expressions, inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue is essential for peace and development in the post-2015 era. My personal initiatives to disseminate these values at home and abroad have been recognized by UNESCO in 2012 by its Cultural Diversity Medal. Culture is integral to the identity of every member state of the United Nations. Therefore, we had proposed to the UNESCO and at the High Level Dialogue on Culture and Development in the General Assembly to include "Culture" as a

theme of the post-2015 Development Agenda. I reiterate that call here today for your support.

16. Bangladesh is held back by resource constraint and inadequate external assistance. To achieve the MDGs within 2015, and to implement the post-2015 development goals, we need our development partners to keep their pledge of contributing 0.7% of their GNP as ODA, and 0.2% of GNP as ODA to the LDCs. I urge them to also grant LDCs, duty-free and quota-free access to their markets; an equal voice in the Bretton Woods Institutions and in the International Financial Institutions, and free movement of labor. Implementation of the Mode IV of the GATS is also essential for the benefit of both sending and receiving countries.

17. The formulation of the post-2015 Development Agenda is a daunting task for all member states of the United Nations. We need to be united in agreeing on a common set of the development agenda that would fulfill our aspiration in building a just, prosperous and sustainable world where no person or nation is left behind. Bangladesh, representing 160 million progressive and resilient people, will lead these efforts from the front.

18. The globalized world has its unique complexities that sometimes threaten peace. Policies based on justice are imperative to diffuse such threats. Justice is the panacea for peace that allows development and progress, which in turn pacify the challenges posed to freedom, democracy, human rights, ecology, climate change, equitable sharing of trans-boundary resources such as water, among others. Our

resolution on the "Culture of Peace" tabled in the UNGA every year is done so in this spirit, and is always adopted by consensus. It conveys the message of mutual respect of peoples and nations in our bid for a world of peace and promise. I believe we all aspire for such a world for our progeny.

I thank you, Mr. President.

Khoda Hafez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu.

May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Long Live the United Nations.

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