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Statement

By

Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina

Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

At the 40th Anniversary Commemorative Event
On Bangladesh's membership to the UN

New York, 26 September 2014
Conference Room 2, UN Head Quarters.

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahiim

Secretary General of the United Nations,
Distinguished representative of member states,
Ladies and Gentleman.

It gives me great pleasure to be here at this commemorative event marking the 40th anniversary of Bangladesh's membership to the United Nations (UN).

At the outset, I pay my deep homage to the Greatest Bangalee of all times, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I recall with deep gratitude the three million martyrs and two hundred thousand women who were violated during our war of liberation.

Bangladesh's membership to the UN on 17 September 1974 is a momentous event in our nation's foreign relations. The newly independent Bangladesh under the visionary leadership of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu, was in search of international recognition and support for the nascent nation.

At that moment, the admission of Bangladesh into the apex international organization came as a great victory for the Bangladeshi people.

On this occasion, I recall with gratitude the support of two friends such as India and the Russian Federation. Both of these countries greatly helped in our War of Liberation in 1971 and played an instrumental role in our membership to the UN as its 136th member.

Today I also recall with appreciation a number of European countries including the UK and Germany, whose governments and people stood next to us during those difficult days.

I take the opportunity to pay my personal tribute to late US Senator Edward M Kennedy, and the American people represented by his liberal humanitarian persona. Senator Kennedy not only raised his voice time and again at the US Senate against the atrocities and genocide committed against the Bengali people, but also visited Bangladesh during our Liberation War.

All our Asian and African friends from the NAM whose leaders and people ardently supported our Liberation Struggle and our post-independence drive to secure UN membership, we are grateful to all of you. I assure you that our friendship and cooperation will continue strength-to-strength within the UN and beyond to our mutual benefits.

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Excellencies,

Our journey at the UN began with the historic speech of the Father of the Nation at the General Assembly on 24 September 1974. Since then, our engagement with the world body continues to be defined and guided by foreign policy values upheld in that speech.

In his speech Father of the Nation made an unequivocal commitment to uphold the UN Charter, and promote peace, tolerance, democracy, human rights, social progress, justice, and the Rule of Law through international cooperation. Those ideals continue to inspire all subsequent diplomatic engagement and leadership of Bangladesh in the UN and its various fora.

Since 1972 until today the UN stood solidly next to Bangladesh and its people in support of our national aspirations for peace, development, democracy and human rights. Much before we became its member, UN Development Funds and Programmes including UNICEF, UNDP, WFP, FAO, UNFPA, UNRWA, UNESCO, all came to post-war Bangladesh's reconstruction support immediately after our independence. UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim visited Bangladesh in 1973 and expressed his solidarity with the Bangabandhu government.

From a humble beginning in 1974, the collaboration of Bangladesh with the UN has grown strength to strength over the last 40 years. It has culminated into a strategic partnership, especially in the areas of UN peace-keeping and peace-building, democracy and human rights, social and economic progress, specially the MDGs, and the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

To the UN and its successive Secretaries General, specially His Excellency Ban ki-Moon, that strengthened our hands nationally and at the world body, I say of behalf of my people, a big 'thank you.'

Excellencies,

During the last 4 decades Bangladesh has remained at the forefront of UN's efforts for global peace and development. We have had the privilege of serving as the President of the 41st UN General Assembly and twice at the UN Security Council. We served 8 terms at the ECOSOC and several terms at Executive Boards and Councils of important UN funds and programs, including UNDP-UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO, WFP, FAO, UN Women, the Human Rights Council, and many more.

I personally deliberated at the historic UN Security Council Summit as a member, and at the Millennium Summit in 2000. We chaired the only high-level meeting of the Peace-building Commission.

Guided by the enduring foreign policy dictum of Bangabandhu- 'friendship to all and malice to none'- pursuit of peace and development remained a cardinal plank of Bangladesh's foreign policy at the UN.

Our flagship resolution at the UN entitled " A Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010" is a testimony to that claim. I have personally championed peoples' empowerment as a precondition for inclusive development in our 'People's empowerment and development' resolution.

Our peace-centric foreign policy had prompted us to emerge as a leader in UN Peace-keeping operations. More than 128,000 'blue helmets' from Bangladesh served in 54 UN peace missions in four continents. Today I recall supreme sacrifice made by 119 of our valiant sons in the cause of global peace.

I thank the UNSG for his recognition of Bangladesh as a 'role model' member State for its achievements in MDGs and global peace. As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of our membership, we humbly take pride in all those impressive achievements we made as a sovereign and democratic nation at the UN.

On this historic occasion, I wish to chart a roadmap for our future engagements at the UN.

- In the days ahead Bangladesh would remain steadfast in our commitment to international peace, security and development.
- We shall continue to remain UN's leading peacekeeper with priority given to safeguarding civilians in danger.
- We shall work together with member states to enhance UN's capacity to effectively respond to wars, conflicts and armed violence.
- At the Peace-building Commission we would contribute our home-grown experiences in nation-building.
- We would firmly remain in the forefront of UN's disarmament agenda including nuclear, maritime, space and cyber security.
- We shall pro-actively contribute to the global combat against terrorism and violent extremism, fight human, narcotics and wildlife trafficking.
- We shall continue to champion a culture of peace and promote 'people's empowerment' for development that is all-inclusive and leaves no one behind.
- We shall champion criminal justice that shatters the culture of impunity for crimes against humanity, sexual violence and genocide.
- We will make constructive contributions to norm setting in the global human rights agenda
- Further strengthen our national human rights, governance and anticorruption regime working with the UN.
- We shall champion girl's and women's empowerment with special focus on tackling violence against women and child marriage.

- Further expand our rights-based interventions for children, including those with special needs such as Autism.
- Bangladesh is poised to enter boldly into the post-2015 era riding on its stellar performance with MDGs.
- We will accelerate our achievement of MDGs and work to build consensus on a set of measurable and achievable goals under the post-2015 development framework.
- As per our national priorities, we shall raise our voice for addressing climate change, international migration, sustainable use of maritime resources and international trade dividends for LDCs.

Bangladesh and the UN have a common mission. To empower people and make the world safer for succeeding generations. We wish to have the UN and member States on our side in realizing our Vision 2021 towards a knowledge-driven Middle Income Economy before our 50th Anniversary at the UN.

As I conclude, I appeal to world leaders to take effective steps to stop wars and conflicts across the world. And the UN play the central role in stopping wars. Let us reject war and work for peace. Bangladesh commits to working with all to make that a reality.

I thank you.

Joy Bangla Joy Banagbandhu

Long live Bangladesh-UN partnership