

**Introductory speech by H.E. Mr. Masud Bin Momen, Permanent
Representative of Bangladesh at the discussion event on ‘Prevention of
Genocide’ in observing the ‘Genocide Day’
Bangladesh Permanent Mission, 25 March 2019**

Excellencies,
Valiant Freedom Fighters of Bangladesh,
Distinguished guests,
Friends and colleagues,
Dear Students.

We are grateful for your kind presence at this panel discussion event to observe the Genocide Day of Bangladesh. Today’s theme is ‘Prevention of Genocide.’

Let me give you the historical context of choosing this day for this event. Today, the 25th of March, is the Genocide Day of Bangladesh. On this day in 1971, upon secret order from Pakistan authorities in the code name ‘Operation searchlight’ Pakistani forces committed the most brutal and targeted mass killing in our capital Dhaka in particular and elsewhere in country which continued throughout the night. Thousands of people from all walks of life including students, teachers, intellectuals, religious minorities and members of different services especially from police and the then East Pakistan Rifles, were killed in the massacre. Dhaka became a valley of death in one single night. The Genocide of 25th of March is a black chapter not only in the history of Bangladesh but also of the history of the world. Therefore, in March 2017 the National Parliament of Bangladesh and the Cabinet designated 25 March as the Genocide Day to commemorate the black night. I recall with deep respect all the martyrs who were killed in this fateful night.

On this occasion, our Hon’ble President and Hon’ble Prime Minister have given special messages. Let me quote a few lines from those messages.

Our Hon’ble President has said “Through the commemoration of Genocide Day, people around the world as well as our next generation will be able to know about the atrocities committed by Pakistani invading forces.”

Our Hon’ble Prime Minister has reiterated “We have taken all-out initiatives to achieve international recognition of genocide of 1971 in Bangladesh.”

The targeted mass killing of 25th March, which was intended to end our aspiration for independence once and for all, was rather the precursor to a nine-month long War of Liberation culminating in our independence in December 1971. As if the atrocities of 25 March were not enough, from that very night over the next 9 months, Pakistan army and their local collaborators killed 3 million people all over the country. Besides, two hundred thousand of our women were dishonoured and nearly 10 million people were driven out of their homes who sought refuge in neighbouring

India. Death of such a large number of people in such a short span of time is unprecedented in the history of the world, which is why this is regarded as one of the world's worst genocides. International bodies, experts, historians and foreign journalists have given their clear opinion and evidence in support of commission of this genocide. The atrocities have been well-documented, there are many scholarly publications on this. Yet, it is unfortunate that a genocide of this scale has not been able to find its rightful place in the international genocide discourse including at the United Nations. We are urging upon the United Nations for due recognition of our genocide in 1971.

Despite such inaction, we are doing our part nationally. Our government under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been conducting the trial of local war criminals to end the culture of impunity.

On this day of Genocide, I pay homage to our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, I remember our four national leaders, I pay respect to the martyred freedom fighters of the Liberation War and all the freedom fighters who are still alive including those who are present here today with us.

It has already been 70 years since the adoption of the Genocide Convention, and yet the specter of genocide and other mass atrocity crimes have not been relegated to the past. The international community's commitment to 'never again' appears defeated in the face of recurrence of grave international crimes in different parts of the world including in the Rakhine state of Myanmar.

In 2019, the world will celebrate the centennial anniversary of Versailles Treaty commonly known as the 'Treaty of Peace' which formally ended the World War I. Since then millions of lives have been lost in atrocity crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, war crimes. Hope this anniversary will provide the world leaders an opportunity to introspect, whether we could have done more to save those lives.

To pay homage to the victims of genocide and atrocity crimes all over the world, let us stand in a moment of silence.

(silence)

Thank you. Let us now proceed with our panel discussions.

Our today's discussion event will feature two panels on the following themes-

- a. **Comparable lessons to be drawn from the past**
- b. **Prevention of future genocide**

We have very distinguished and experienced panelists for today's discussion. At the first panel, we have distinguished Permanent Representatives of Armenia, Cambodia, Croatia and one of the Secretaries of Bangladesh Foreign Ministry. Executive Director of Global Center for Responsibility to Protect Dr. Simon Adams will moderate this panel.

In the second panel, we will have distinguished Permanent Representative of Rwanda, the distinguished Permanent Representative of Slovakia in his capacity as the Vice President of the Assembly of States Parties of International Criminal Court and distinguished Genocide Scholar Mr. Alex Hinton, Professor of Rutgers University, New Jersey. This session will be moderated by distinguished Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein.

Each session will be followed by a short interactive session with the audience.

We have a diverse audience today including diplomats, UN officials, Civil Society Representatives, as well as students from New York University. Hope, this discussion event would provide an opportunity to translate our collective reflection on the horrors of genocide into renewing our commitment to work towards preventing the commission of genocides anywhere in the world.

Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the prevention of Genocide Mr. Adama Dieng was supposed to be present in our event today. But Mr. Dieng is now in Bangladesh on an official visit. When he met our Prime Minister there, the issue of Bangladesh's genocide was discussed. He also spoke at a seminar titled '1971 Genocide in Bangladesh' at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies.

Without further ado, let's watch the video message first, and then the panel will begin.

Thank you all.