

**Statement of H.E. Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen, M.P., Hon'ble Foreign Minister  
Annual High-Level Meeting of the United Nations Alliance of Civilization  
(UNAoC) Group of Friends on 29 September 2020  
"Shaping a Better World: Building Cohesive and Inclusive Societies in a  
Challenging COVID-19 Environment"**

**Mr. Chair,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,**

At the outset, let me congratulate the Alliance for completing its 15 years. We appreciate the important work that the High Representative has planned to undertake in the Action Plan (2019-2023).

The world today is undergoing an unprecedented crisis. The current pandemic has not only generated multifaceted challenges but also spawned mistrusts, intolerance, hatred and suspicions. In the face of increasing trend of hate speech and xenophobic statements, the theme of today's meeting "Shaping a better world: Building cohesive and inclusive Societies in a Challenging COVID-19 Environment" has aptly chosen.

**Mr. Chair,**

A country born out of a heroic war and sacrifice of millions, Bangladesh greatly values the principles of tolerance, dialogue and understanding. The components of peace, democracy, secularism, and social and religious tolerance, ethnic diversity and communal harmony, are held high as the fundamental principles of our Constitution. The strong assertion of our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman made in his maiden speech in the UN on 25th September 1974, and I quote. ***"Peace is an imperative for the survival of mankind."***, unquote has shaped our peace-centric, tolerant state policy. Guided by this vision, we have conceptualized the idea of 'Culture of Peace' and has been facilitating a resolution in the UN for the last 21 years.

We believe that wars and violence emanate from a mindset of hatred and intolerance. Uprooting over 1.1 million ethnic minority persecuted Rohingyas of Myanmar is an example of it. Therefore, in order to achieve peace and harmony, we must inculcate a mindset of tolerance, a mindset of respect and love for others irrespective of religion, ethnicity, colour and race. This Alliance of Civilization can be an effective 'soft power' to bring about changes in the mindset of people which is essential for a sustainable world of peace and stability.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Covid-19 is confronting our societies with a daunting degree of disruption. It has already caused a huge loss of lives and threatened our hard-earned development gains. Countries experiencing fragility, protracted conflict, recurrent natural disasters or forced displacement face a multiple burden. The crisis can potentially exacerbate grievances, mistrust and sense of injustice over access to health services, decent jobs and livelihoods, and drive conflict that could undermine development, peace and social cohesion. However, the lessons from previous crises tell us that inclusion, partnership, and diversity are critical for recovery and resilience.

At this challenging time, more than ever before, we must reinforce social cohesion and peaceful coexistence to contribute to preventing social tensions between individuals and communities.

I hope the Alliance will forge new and innovative partnerships in pursuit of peace, justice and human dignity as we recover from the Covid environment.

I thank you.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu