

**12th Ministerial Meeting on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P),
entitled “Building Back Better: Strengthen the UN, Prevent Atrocities and
Uphold Human Rights.”
Thursday, 24 September 2020**

Excellencies, distinguished speakers, ladies and gentlemen

I thank the organizers for hosting this ministerial meeting on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). This year marks the 75th anniversary of the UN and the 15th anniversary of the adoption of the Principle of the Responsibility to Protect.

2020 is also an important year for Bangladesh when we celebrate the birth centenary of the Father of our Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the greatest Bengalee of all time. Throughout his life, Bangabandhu fought against oppression and injustice and worked for protecting the human rights of his people.

On this occasion, Bangladesh reiterates its commitment to R2P. We believe that multilateralism is the most effective tool for implementing the principle of R2P, with the UN playing the central role.

Excellencies,

The pandemic Covid-19 has affected all aspects of our life and jeopardized our economic and social achievements.

The pandemic, among others, has generated many social ills. In the words of Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, “*the pandemic continues to unleash a tsunami of hate and xenophobia, scapegoating and scaremongering.*”

States must guard against the fallouts of the pandemic, including disparities, intolerance and racial hatred, and protect migrants, minorities, and other vulnerable groups.

Excellencies

We have seen how hatred and intolerance can lead to mass atrocities, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. This is what happened in Rwanda in 1994 and Srebrenica in 1995. In Myanmar, mass atrocities and systematic violations of human rights also forced nearly a million Rohingyas to flee Myanmar in 2017.

When these persecuted, tortured, and traumatized Myanmar nationals gathered across our border, Bangladesh acted responsibly. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the Mother of Humanity, decided to open our border to protect these people and shelter them temporarily. But even after three years, not a single Rohingya could return home due to a lack of political will and conducive environment in Myanmar.

Sadly, instead of creating conditions favorable for repatriation, more violence is being pursued against the Rohingyas in the Rakhine State. Defying the obligations of the UN Security Council Resolution 2532, Myanmar kept Rakhine State outside the scope of the ceasefire.

The Fact-Finding Mission of the UN already alerted that the remaining 600,000 (six hundred thousand) Rohingyas are at risk of genocide. Compelling evidence has resulted in the issuance of provisional orders from the International Court of Justice. Yet Myanmar has not done anything to change its course.

The international community must bring pressure to bear on Myanmar to stop the atrocities and create a conducive environment so that the Rohingyas can return home. Let us not sit idle and watch the unfolding of another episode of atrocities with genocidal intent.

Excellencies

We are going through an unsettling time. The COVID-19 has laid bare the hollowness of our traditional concepts of development. Inclusive, people-centric development with full respect for human rights and equality has become imperative.

Now that we have an opportunity to build back better, we need to refocus our priorities with the international community working in full solidarity. Multilateralism is not an option to face the challenges of the pandemic but a necessity.

Since its birth, Bangladesh has placed the highest trust and confidence in the power of multilateralism. Bangladesh will continue to support the UN's pivotal role in preventing atrocities, protecting human rights, and sustaining peace.

Thank you.

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