

Bangladesh Country Statement
Delivered by
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Mr. Chairman

Madam Executive Secretary

Excellencies, Ministers, Head of the Delegations

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon!

It is a great pleasure indeed for me to speak on behalf of the Bangladesh delegation at the Seventy-second Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) being held in this historic and beautiful city of Bangkok. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my own and my delegation's warmest felicitation to you Mr. Chairman on your election as the Chairman of this session. Please accept our deep appreciation for successfully conducting its agenda. I strongly believe that under your able guidance and stewardship the session will put forward creative and innovative ideas and result in productive deliberations and directions. I wish you every success and assure you the fullest cooperation of the Bangladesh delegation. I also like to thank Madam Executive Secretary Dr. Shamshad Akhtar and her team for their hard work and excellent arrangements for the Session.

Mr. Chairman,

The Year 2016 is important for us as after completion of MDGs era we have stepped in a new era of development when the world leaders having set an ambitious target of ending poverty by the year 2030 under Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We need to ensure that growth is coupled with creating opportunities and making them accessible to all. SDGs recognize that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development and thus it emphasizes on inclusive growth which would bring benefits for all particularly the poor, to the maximum extent possible.

We will never be able to sustain our development unless we include all stakeholders in the development processes irrespective of their gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, disability or poverty. An inclusive growth through collaborative partnership between countries and all stakeholders, based on mutual respect and trust, is crucial for achieving the goal of eradicating poverty within the timeframe envisaged in 2030 agenda for sustainable development. In this context, we would like to thank the pragmatic leadership of UNESCAP in choosing the appropriate policy issue for discussion: *'Key challenges to inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific'* for its seventy-second session.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me take this opportunity to briefly highlight recent achievements and future strategies of Bangladesh for inclusive and sustainable economic and social development. Bangladesh experienced a uniform and steady decline in poverty rates from 2000 to 2015. Poverty rates demonstrated an impressive improvement with an average decline of 1.61 percentage points per year over the period. In 2000, 48.9 percent of the population was poor; by 2015, this

dropped to 24.8 percent notwithstanding the series of internal and external shocks that affected Bangladesh in 2007-2008.

In recent times, the economy of the country has been doing well and remaining strong and resilient despite external and internal challenges. You will be happy to know that Bangladesh is among the top 12 developing countries in the world with a population of over 20 million, who are going to achieve 6 plus percent growth in 2016. In fact, we are expecting that this year our GDP growth will exceed 7.05% for the first time in our history. Overall inflation declined from 6.5% in March last year to 5.65% in March this year. The balance of payment (BoP) remains comfortable with a large surplus in both current and financial accounts, due to recovery in export, increased Foreign Direct Investment and disbursements of official development assistances.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bangladesh has recently adopted its 7th five year plan which coincides with the adoption of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and the commencement of the implementation of the SDGs. The 7th Plan seeks to raise the GDP growth rate progressively from 6.5% in FY2015 to 8% by FY2020. The average growth rate is projected at 7.4% over the Seventh Plan period. Along with strategies for rapid economic growth of 7% plus, the 7th FYP will ensure that complimentary strategies and policies are in place to make the growth path inclusive, responsive and adaptable to the ongoing urban transition, is resilient to climate change and is sustainable over the long term without damaging the natural environment. It therefore encapsulates a strategy for inclusive growth which empowers people by creating employment opportunities, fostering the scope for greater labor force participation, particularly of women, supporting skill development in response to market demand, enabling access to credit for small and medium enterprises, and many

other ways for people to be more productive. Thus, inclusiveness is meant to capture more than income, to include opportunity, productive employment, and access to services for the marginalized and physically challenged people.

To address the challenge of mainstreaming sustainable development across sectors and integrate economic, social and environmental objectives across them, the Government has adopted the National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS). The growth strategies of the 7th FYP therefore are broad-based enough to emphasize eradicating poverty as well as sustained economic growth, enhancing social inclusion, improving human welfare and creating opportunities for employment and decent work for all, while maintaining the healthy functioning of the Earth's ecosystems. Additionally, the government has approved a National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) with a view to strengthening the impact of the public spending on social protection and to modernize the social security system to address the social security challenges of a middle income economy.

Distinguished Delegates,

Now, let me talk about some potential challenges that we are foreseeing in coming days and our apprehension is that many of the countries of the region might be facing the similar situations in future.

As the economy grows, private sector is becoming the key actor in development financing. Bangladesh would require 409 billion USD to implement 7th FYP out of which 78% is expected to be contributed by private sector. Therefore any challenge in providing conducive and coherent policy support to private sector would undermine overall financing plan.

The implementation of robust activities to achieve the targets of 7th FYP requires capable institutions and personnel. Despite improvements, still many

public sectors face capacity challenge both at institutional and at individual level.

Bangladesh needs resources in key areas like infrastructure, energy and transport. Private sector participation can help address part of the infrastructure gap, but the country needs substantial public sector funding for investments in mega projects in transport and other infrastructures for which external resource flow will remain crucial.

For sustaining inclusive growth, it is important to make adequate public investments in social sectors especially in education and health programmes along with other essential services so that the poor can enhance their capacity to avail newly created opportunities. Though the association between inclusive economic growth and the level of public spending on education and health is well established but huge investment in the sectors always remains a challenge for developing countries like Bangladesh.

Distinguished delegates,

Remittances sent by more than eight million migrant workers plays a crucial role in Bangladesh economy, helping reduce the overall incidence of poverty as well as maintaining a healthy balance of payments. The contribution of remittance to GDP is around 12%. Easy and safe migration of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers and the professionals with reasonable costs is crucial to continue the growth of remittance. Economic downturn, geo-political situations and stringent policy measures about migrants of the recipient countries are the major potential challenges for remittance earning.

The contribution of trade for achieving inclusive growth and sustainable development is indispensable. Several internal and external factors can affect international trade performance resulting in having negative effect on private sector growth and contribution. Trade related assistance can help partner

countries take advantage of opportunities created by unilateral, bilateral and multilateral openings and hence it is an important tool to facilitate trade reforms, improve the business environment and support regional integration. Availability of adequate amount of trade related assistance is always a challenge for the partner country.

Mr. Chairman

Bangladesh is the worst victim of climate change and many countries in the Asia Pacific are not expected to fare well in the near future. Common events of vulnerabilities due to climate change like flood, drought, water logging, salinity intrusion, tidal surge, uncertain rainfall, land degradation, extreme temperatures are posing serious threats to our sustainable development efforts. Therefore, access to right fund at the right time and the right amount would be critical for climate change mitigation and adaptation activities to continue and sustain the economic growth.

Mr. Chairman,

We hope that ESCAP would come up with the smartest solutions to overcome the challenges faced by the countries vis-à-vis the region to prosper with social equity and sustainability. Many countries have done well than other. We can learn from each other. ESCAP may play the role of knowledge broker for sustainable inclusive development in the region and beyond. Finally we would like to call upon the leaders of the Asia-Pacific region to make a real commitment that we would develop to meet the needs of our present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own dreams and aspirations.

I thank you all.