



Bangladesh Development Forum

15-16 November, 2015

Dhaka, Bangladesh

Proceedings

The Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) was held on 15-16 November 2015 in Dhaka to share and exchange views about the country's development vision, priorities and strategies with the development partners. The BDF brought together policy makers, policy executives, development practitioners, civil society members, think tank members, private sector players, academicians, researchers and representatives of the development partners for a strengthened partnership and cooperation towards achieving development effectiveness in Bangladesh.

Honorable Prime Minister of the Government of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina, MP, inaugurated the BDF 2015 main session and the BDF "Development Fair" wherein 17 government agencies, 16 development partners, 08 non-government organizations and private sector organizations set up stalls to demonstrate their achievements and innovations.



A total of 1964 (one thousand nine hundred and sixty four) representatives from the development partners, international development agencies, foreign missions, civil society organizations, private sectors, think tanks, research organizations, and Ministries/Divisions of the Government of Bangladesh were present at the different sessions of the BDF.

The BDF was structured around a keynote session devoted to "Macro-Economic Management: A Journey from Lower to Higher Middle Income Country through an Inclusive Growth Strategy ensuring SDGs" and six thematic working sessions centered on the country's 7th Five Year Plan and the UN's SDG implementation strategies. The thematic working sessions included (i) Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change; (ii) Strengthening the Economic Foundations: Strategies for Development of Infrastructure; (iii) Governance and Development: Strengthening Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation; (iv) Health and Quality Education: Offering a Secure Future for All; (v) Social Protection: Leaving No One Behind; and (vi) Mainstreaming Gender in Economic Development.

The working sessions were chaired by Hon'ble Ministers of the Government of Bangladesh and Secretaries to the Government, including the Senior Secretary of Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance. Representatives of the development partners, civil society members, private sector players and senior officials of the Government of Bangladesh participated and suggest necessary actions for implementation of the government's 7th Five Year Plan and the UN's SDGs. BDF ended with a number of recommendations for increased efforts towards each of the six thematic areas presented in the working sessions.

Inaugural Session (Presented In Order of Speaking Slot)

Welcome remarks by Mr. Mohammad Mejbahuddin, Senior Secretary, Economic Relations Division (ERD), Ministry of Finance and Co-chair, Local Consultative Group (LCG):



The ERD Senior Secretary welcomed the participants to BDF-2015 and expressed his sincere gratitude to the representatives of the development partners, especially those who came a long way from their headquarters, civil society, think tanks, research institutes, non-government organizations and the government's ministries for attending the forum. He hoped that this two-day event would offer the stakeholders a good opportunity for engaging in discussions on the critical issues of development effectiveness for the country's elevation to the upper middle income status in the

near future.

He referred to government's 7th Five Year Plan which has articulated new strategies and policies towards completing the remaining agenda of the socio-economic outcomes of the government's Vision 2021 and the Perspective Plan. According to him, the 7th Five Year Plan has laid a strong foundation for realization of the SDGs in pursuit of the country's graduation to the non-LDC status. Implementation of the SDGs and other development interventions in the sectors of physical infrastructure, health, education and institutional capacity-building has necessitated greater mobilization of resources, he argued.

He posited that ODA could play catalytic roles to create capacity for enhanced mobilization of domestic resources, to bring in the private sector for development investments, to support quality education and skills development for the knowledge-led development and to support research and development to upscale the technical base. He then put forward agriculture, food security and climate change; infrastructure; partnership for effective development; health and education; social protection; and gender for extensive discussions at the working sessions. Since the BDF took place in the wake of the successful launching of the SDGs, it has provided an excellent opportunity for how to implement the globally agreed goals at the national level, he observed.

He expressed optimism that BDF would serve as a starting point for discussions with the stakeholders on the possible pathways for translating the internationally endorsed UN SDGs into actions in Bangladesh. He concluded his remarks by thanking his LCG and ERD colleagues for their sincere efforts in making the BDF take place in a befitting way.

Welcome remarks by Ms. Janina Jaruzelski, Head of Mission, USAID Bangladesh and Co-chair, Local Consultative Group:



The USAID Mission Director expressed her satisfaction over the long-standing strong partnership between the development partners and government of Bangladesh. She appreciated the significant progress Bangladesh has made in many key sectors of development, and hoped that the country would also make remarkable progress in realizing the new SDGs as it succeeded in demonstrating the capability to make outstanding progress realizing the key MDGs. She applauded the country's recent

graduation to the lower middle income status with an aim at achieving the higher middle income threshold by 2021.

She stressed the need for more investment in infrastructure, renewable energy and quality education as well as skills development of the young people of the country. Issues of modernization of the institutions of governance; national social security strategy; mainstreaming of women and prevention of gender-based violence along with child marriage; public finance reforms; urban migration; and quality enhancement in health and education were emphasized in her remarks. While applauding the huge progress the Government of Bangladesh made in addressing the climate change problems, she put stress on protection of the Sundarbans as an essential natural shield from cyclones, flooding and other climate shocks. She considered BDF a valuable platform for further strengthening the development partnership between the government of Bangladesh and development partners.

Statement by Mr. Kingo Toyoda, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Japan:

In his statement, Mr. Toyoda appreciated the strong initiatives the government of Bangladesh has taken for significant achievements in the MDGs; remarkable contribution to the adaptation of the SDGs and maintenance of the country's macroeconomic stability under the dynamic leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. He hoped that the BDF would help to strengthen the country's partnership with all the stakeholders in its pursuit of successfully addressing the development challenges. He referred to the Joint Statement signed by Hon'ble Prime Ministers of Japan and Bangladesh to realize a "Comprehensive Partnership" between the two countries with special focus on promotion of quality infrastructure investment.

He also remarked that the Japanese Government has adopted a new Development Cooperation Charter, the foundation of the Japanese ODA. According to him, a greater importance has been attached to quality growth aiming at inclusiveness, sustainability and resilience in the newly adopted charter. He touched upon the Japanese initiative of the Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt (BIG-B) under which the Japanese Government would like to assist Bangladesh in establishing a growth belt along the Bay of Bengal through development of economic infrastructure, improvement in investment environment and promotion of connectivity. He appreciated the government's efforts towards implementing the National Integrity Strategy for transparency and accountability. He called on the government, development partners and civil society members to unite their efforts to help Bangladesh achieve its goal and enabling its citizens to enjoy the living standards of a upper middle income country by 2021.

Statement by Mr. Wencai Zhang, Vice Present, Asian Development Bank (ADB):



Mr. Zhang observed that Bangladesh has achieved remarkable economic growth and human development under the government's Vision 2021 and Perspective Plan. According to him, consistent economic growth exceeding 6% on average over more than a decade and 6.3% on average during the 6th Five Year Plan brought Bangladesh to become a middle-income country; and poverty reduction by half between 1990 and 2015 fulfilled one important MDG.

He commended the remarkable achievements under the dynamic leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh. Moving towards a higher level of

development under the 7th Five Year Plan aiming at greater prosperity to the people with a higher growth trajectory of 7.4% a year on average during the next five years was very much encouraging. He stressed the need of industrial development, export diversification and greater mobilization of private sector for transformational infrastructure investment. He also opined that such transformational infrastructural investment would lay the foundation for an integrated and spatial development, such as, economic corridor development which would place Bangladesh in the core of the regional and global value chains.

ADB's response to the country's higher growth path with the assistance level of USD 5 billion over the next 3 years; alignment of ADB's partnership strategy with the government's 7th Five Year Plan in an effort towards meeting the SDGs; ADB's intention of supporting major transformational infrastructure development, crop diversification and value chain development, skills for employment and information technology parks for employment; and the government's initiatives in regional cooperation and integration further to the recent signing of Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal Motor Vehicles Agreement and the electricity grid interconnection with India were highlighted in his statement. Finally, he indicated ADB's strong partnership with the government and other development partners in moving forward towards Bangladesh in higher middle income and beyond.

Statement by Mr. Jin Liqun, President-designate, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB):



Mr. Liqun started his remarks by congratulating the government of Bangladesh on achieving remarkable economic success with an average annual GDP growth of nearly 6% over the past decade. He hoped that the two-day BDF would focus on the issues of development support to Bangladesh for poverty reduction. With reference to China's experiences, he opined that poverty reduction necessitates a huge investment in infrastructure development. In his opinion, AIIB would be characterized as "LEAN"; "CLEAN" and "GREEN" --respectively meaning that AIIB

will remain a relatively small organization with a centralized Management and non-resident Board for savings maximization and quick decision-making; will have zero tolerance for corruption to maintain the highest level of transparency; and will emphasize climate adaptation, resilience and mitigation pioneering new approach towards green finance and procurement.

He went on to say that the AIIB Charter enshrines the commitments of the member countries to world-class governance and operational arrangements; while its policies will be developed by international experts having decade of experience in other international organizations and the private sector. He appreciated receiving support from the World Bank and Asian Development Bank; and assured the audience that AIIB will not ignore lessons learnt over the past seven decades of global experience. He expressed optimism that this organization will do things differently apart from its exercise of the international best practices. AIIB's efficient and expeditious loan disbursement towards filling up the infrastructure financing gap in Asia; costs minimization as well as benefits maximization and avoidance of the repeated capital increases were mentioned in his statement. He expressed confidence that with the continued support of the stakeholders and in partnership with other international financial institutions, AIIB will start lending money from 2016 pursuant to its prudent policies; and thereby make contribution to economic development and poverty reduction across Asia, including Bangladesh. He concluded his remarks wishing BDF a great success.

*Address by Mr. Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, MP, Hon'ble Minister for Finance,
Government of Bangladesh:*



Mr. Abul Maal A. Muhith, MP, Hon'ble Minister for Finance chaired the inaugural session. He welcomed the participants to the BDF-2015 organized for the second time since the present government came to power in 2009. He reminisced that the first major meeting with the development partners was held in 1973 in Dhaka to help Bangladesh rebuild its economy that was completely destroyed by the Pakistani Army during the war of independence. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, donor coordination was held under the aegis of the Paris Aid Consortium for Bangladesh. He remarked that the forms and nature of development cooperation as well as changed development priorities of Bangladesh led to discontinuation of the Paris Forum over the years. Instead, a home grown and country-driven platform to manage and coordinate the country's development cooperation has been devised. As a result, the development forums have been entirely nationally managed events for Bangladesh since 2000.

Engagement of academics and civil society members in the BDF events as participants and panelists encouraged culture of inclusiveness. BDFs have provided the opportunity to reflect on the country's development stages, strategies for managing growth and development challenges. He opined that discussions in the BDF-2015 would help the development partners to know the priority areas and strategies being followed by the government of Bangladesh.

He observed that the BDF-2015 took place against the backdrop of the government's adoption of its 7th Five Year Plan pursuant to its Vision 2021 and the successful launching of the SGDs by the UN. It was, therefore, very crucial for identifying joint actions on the basis of partnership of equals, mutual respect, and complementarity in making the government's Vision 2021 a reality and at the same time setting the directions and stimulating the actions for next 15 years in achieving the goals and targets of sustainable development.

He highlighted the country's achievement in different areas. Bangladesh achieved over 6% growth during the last six years; reduced income inequality; attainment of most of the MDGs; poverty reduction to 24.8% in 2015 with a target of bringing it down to 18.6% in the terminal year of the 7th Five Year Plan (2020) and its further reduction to 15% by 2021; the outlay of BDT 31,902.8 billion (USD 398 billion) for real sectors of which public and private sectors contribution will respectively be 23% and 77% and the share of external financing to the total outlay will be 9.6%; investment as percentage of GDP to reach 34.4% in the final year of the 7th Five Year Plan; implementation of Annual Performance Agreement concluded between the line ministries and the Cabinet Division; a second generation Citizens Charter introduced by the government organizations; disclosure of information under the Right to Information Act to improve transparency, accountability and the overall quality of governance; and increased size of Annual Development Programme by more than three times were mentioned in his speech.

In reference to the World Bank's categorization of Bangladesh as a lower-middle income country and Bangladesh's target to become an upper middle-income country by 2021 and a developed country by 2041, he stressed the requirement of huge investments from both the internal and external sources. As ODA accounted for 33% of Annual Development Program expenditure in FY 2013-14, one of the key strategies of the 7th Five Year Plan is to ensure effective partnership with the development partners for better use and outcome of foreign assistance, he continued.

He reiterated the country's commitment towards the implementation of the international principles of effective development as endorsed by the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005; the subsequent Accra Agenda for Action in 2008; and finally the Busan Partnership in 2011 underscoring the need for alignment of development assistance with the national priorities and a number of measures for its effective utilization of aid. He referred to the challenges of development effectiveness in Bangladesh, which includes (i) continued proliferation of stand-alone projects and heavy aid fragmentation, (ii) less vibrant coordination in sector level working groups resulting in less alignment with sectoral plan, (iii) low harmonization and low use of country systems, and (iv) capacity deficits and implementation lag.

The country's good track record in terms of forging effective partnerships with the development partners; adaptation of a Joint Cooperation Strategy in 2010 laying the cornerstone for development cooperation; possible revision in the Joint Cooperation Strategy following the BDF-2015 for accommodating the country's changed policies and perspectives; scope and modalities of development cooperation; and donor coordination mechanism consisting in the Local Consultative Group along with its 18 sectoral Working Groups were highlighted in his statement.

Preparation of the National Policy on Development Cooperation to guide development cooperation in Bangladesh from strategic perspective; introduction of Aid Information Management System (AIMS) in line with the requirements of the 7th Five Year Plan; and setting up a dedicated wing titled Development Effectiveness Wing in ERD in line with its commitment to enhance the effective development cooperation through strengthened partnership with special focus on reaching out more pro-actively to emerging actors in development such as the private sector and the southern donors were also flagged up in his speech.

He remarked that graduation to the lower middle income country status might lead to a trap and lead to less concessional terms for borrowing from development partners. He, therefore, felt the necessity of using aid more smartly targeting it in areas where it can create conditions for investment of other resources and can demonstrate clear results. The catalytic role of ODA for domestic resource mobilisation has been emphasized in his speech. According to him, aid should facilitate additional investments from multiple sources, including private finance. ODA should be used in the areas of productivity, infrastructure, improving foreign direct investment and public-private partnerships etc., he argued. As such, he informed that the country's new Development Cooperation Policy will reflect these strategic approaches.

The country's role in boosting South Asian Regional Economic Cooperation for greater connectivity, regional infrastructure networking in roads, power and energy, ports, ICT, trade promotion and investment; and the recent signing of Bangladesh-Bhutan-Nepal-India Motor Vehicle Agreement for closer economic integration of the region; successful management of external debt; and growth of national savings, export and remittance were referred to in his remarks. He, however, hoped that the development partners would be supportive of the government's efforts towards meeting the huge investment requirements under the 7th Five Year Plan and beyond to achieve the higher middle income threshold.

The Chair concluded his statement by expressing his profound gratitude to Hon'ble Prime Minister for her gracious presence in the inaugural session of the Forum and thanked the participants for attending this big event.

Inaugural Address by Sheikh Hasina, Hon'ble Prime Minister of the Government of Bangladesh:

Hon'ble Prime Minister of the Government of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina, MP welcomed the participants to the BDF. She was pleased to inform the distinguished audience that Bangladesh has been making significant efforts towards ensuring the socio-economic sustainability since its independence earned in 1971 through a nine-month bloody war under the visionary leadership of the Father of the Nation,



Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. She remarked that Bangladesh has made substantial progress in many areas of the socio-economic development despite various challenges and constraints. Significant efforts are well underway to realize the government's 7th Five Year Plan and Vision 2021, she added. She sought cooperation from the development partners, civil society members, intelligentsia, private sector players for implementation of the SDGs and the development agenda as set out in the plans. She hoped that BDF would come up with some prudent and effective recommendations with regard to realizing the SDGs and

maintaining the macroeconomic sustainability.

She said, in the event of the climate change risks and other development challenges, the international community should revisit their current global trade system to remove constrains for poverty reduction and employment creation, she observed. She also underscored the need for wage maximization for the migrant workers taking into account their skills and experiences. She went on to refer to the issues of global warming and climate change from which Bangladesh has suffered worst. While highlighting the climate change mitigation and adaptation measures put in place by her government, she stressed the easy access to the global climate financing arrangements. She also focused on the country's lead in building regional cooperation processes, such as, SAARC, BIMSTEC and BCIM-EC for development collaborations in sectors like ICT, energy, power, agriculture, manufacturing, trade and environment.

She also underlined GoB's success in adoption of the proven policies and interventions in accelerating growth; minimizing budget deficit; achieving higher growth in exports; acquiring satisfactory foreign currency reserve; establishing a large number of special economic zones to attract foreign direct investments; introducing the social safety net programmes for inclusive growth, women empowerment and gender mainstreaming; and setting the poverty reduction target at below 14% by 2021 were highlighted in her statement. She expressed confidence in achieving the country's middle income status by 2021 and in its becoming a developed one by 2041, given the available development potentials and inclusive growth strategies. She called upon the development partners to provide support to the country's development pursuits. She formally inaugurated the forum before concluding the speech.

**Keynote Sessions:
Macroeconomic Management: A Journey from Lower to Higher Middle Income Country through an
Inclusive Growth Strategy ensuring SDGs**



The session was chaired by Mr. Abul Maal A. Muhith, Hon'ble Minister of Finance. Dr Atiur Rahman, Governor of Bangladesh Bank, Mr. Mahbub Ahmed, Senior Secretary of Finance Division, Mr. Martin Rama, World Bank's Chief Economist for South Asia, Mr. Robert Watkins, UN Resident Coordinator, Bangladesh, and Mr. Rodrigo Cubero, IMF Mission Chief were on the panel.

Dr. Shamsul Alam, Member (Senior Secretary) of General Economics Division, Bangladesh Planning Commission gave a presentation on the topic. In his presentation, he focused on the goals and strategies of the 7th Five Year Plan recently adopted by the government of Bangladesh in pursuit of the people's aspiration for elevation to the middle income status. He also gave an account of the achievements against the targets of the immediate past 6th five year plan along with a broader picture relating to thrusts, sectoral challenges and resource requirements of the 7th five year plan.

He also explained the experiences of MDGs and inclusive growth strategy of the Government ensuring SDGs. Despite all initial constraints Bangladesh has now reached a development trajectory where the country is regarded as a role model of development. Poverty is now down to 24.8%, which was around 70% in the early years of independence. Food production has more than tripled to 35 million tones despite shrinking farm land. Population growth rate was 2.6%, which has been brought down to 1.37%. Life expectancy has risen to 70.7 years from 42 years in 1971. Average number of children born per women has come down from 6.9 to 2.11. Under-5 mortality rate has been brought down to 41 per 1000 live births. Literacy rate has increased to 57.2% with female literacy of 55.1%. Primary enrolment rate has risen to 98% with female enrolment at 98.8%. Gender parity has been achieved not only at the primary level but also at the secondary level. Women, in particular poor rural women were empowered through microcredit operations. The broader economy has undergone deep structural transformation with manufacturing power-house RMG turning into a \$25 billion plus export sector from late 1970s base of few million dollars. In spite of extremely vulnerable ecology, Bangladesh has established a credible record of sustained growth within a stable macroeconomic framework. Growth rates have moved upwards from a low of 2-3% in the 1970s to 3-4% in the 1980s to 4-5% in the 1990s to over 6% in the current decade. The rural-urban divide has given way to a rural-urban continuum. Due to the exemplary resilience of its hardworking population, the country continues to make significant strides, and Bangladesh has elevated to a lower middle income country in 2015.

He added that the Perspective Plan was prepared with a view to transform the government's Vision 2021 into a long-term development strategy through the implementation of two successive Five Year Plans. The tenure of the 6th Five Year Plan ended in June 2015 is followed by the newly formulated 7th Five Year Plan which will continue until June 2020. The performance of the 6th Five Year Plan in the areas of growth, economic transformation, employment generation, labor productivity, gender empowerment, social inclusion, environment and disaster management and macroeconomic management found expression in his presentation.

He then pointed out to the major thrust of the 7th Five Year Plan that includes high growth, poverty reduction and inclusiveness targeting an increase in the GDP growth rate from 6.5% in the fiscal year 2015 to 8% by the fiscal year 2020. To this effect, expansion of the investment rate from 28.9% in the fiscal year 2015 to around 34.4% by the fiscal year 2020; a rise in revenue from 12.1% of GDP to 16.1% by the fiscal year 2020 against the current fiscal deficit of 5% of GDP; and export worth of about USD 54 billion with the trade-GDP ratio at 50% by the fiscal year 2020; poverty reduction to 18.6% and extreme poverty reduction to around 8.9% and creation of 12.9 million additional jobs out of which some 2 million jobs abroad for migrant workers as compared with the 9.9 million new entrants are the requirements, he informed.

He pointed out to the three key areas of governance, which include (i) Justice and Rule of Law, (ii) Public Sector Capacity in terms of Administration and Financial Management, and (iii) Economic Governance. Provision for appointment of an Ombudsman in the Constitution, transparent recruitment of the Supreme Court judges, digitization of the case recording and tracking system and up-scaling and strengthening of the village courts were mentioned in his presentation.

With regard to the implementation of the Plan, he informed that the major challenges in agriculture are identified as sustaining growth and increasing productivity; investment in research and incentives for the agricultural scientists; minimizing yield gap; technology transfer or dissemination; commercialization of agriculture; diversification into high value crops; increasing soil fertility etc. There are challenges in health, education, water management, environment and climate change issue, urbanization, housing, social protection, transport and communication etc., he continued.

According to him, total investment requirements for implantation of the 7th Five Year Plan are projected to an amount of USD 409.01 billion. Around 77.27% of the total investment is expected to come from the private sector. The domestic resources in the form of domestic savings will continue to play a dominant role in financing of the Plan. Of the total investment, 90.43% will be financed through domestic resources and the remaining 9.56% will be financed through external resources. The country is a bit ambitious in mobilizing domestic resource mobilization.

He went on to say the country needs about USD 9 billion additional investment in major infrastructure projects every year to sustain growth at a higher level. There is a need for more ODA to implement the Plan. Effective partnership with the development partners to ensure better use of foreign assistance is one of the strategies in the Plan. The interdependent mix of domestic and external resources, technology development and transfer, capacity-building, equitable globalization and trade, regional integration, as well as, the creation of a national enabling environment required to implement the SDGs would be crucial for Bangladesh.

Observations of the Panelists:

Mr. Robert D. Watkins, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Bangladesh appreciated the country's achievements in most of the areas of MDGs. With reference to the government's 7th Five Year Plan, he flagged up some challenges in its implementation. He observed that despite the rise of the per capita income to USD 1350, 39 million people still live below the poverty line that poses a big challenge for the country. He identified Governance; Equal Distribution of Wealth; Access to Finance; and Competitiveness as the crucially important areas where the government needs to further reinforce its efforts towards achieving high and inclusive growth.

Mr. Martin Rama, World Bank's Chief Economist for South Asia and Acting Country Director of the World Bank Dhaka Office remarked that the target of GDP growth rate at 8% in the terminal year of the Plan sounds a bit than the current rate of 6%. He, however, appreciated the country's macroeconomic stability. He observed that in spite of the stagnancy in the growth of private investment the Plan projected an increase in the private investment from 22% to 27%. It is expected that some 12.9 million additional jobs will be created during the 7th Five Year Plan as compared with the 9.9 million new entrants. This may subsequently increase the overall wage level which will be a problem. The government will need to prioritize the targets and goals in order to materialize its aspiration for becoming the upper middle income status. He identified Energy (expensive fuel mix); Infrastructure (USD 9 billion additional financing required annually); Tax-GDP ratio (which is one of the lowest in Bangladesh); and competitiveness as the potential constraints for the country's economic growth path. Bangladesh will have to gradually move from less to more expensive energy

choice. The country will have to set the price of energy in a socially sustainable manner. On infrastructure front, financing need is very high. The financing need should be realistically designed. A number of reforms in the areas of taxes, customs and Companies Act need to be implemented. Though it is planned to create huge number of jobs in the coming years making the country an export powerhouse, many of the indicators do not look impressive. Access to land for setting up businesses and other legal issues and coordination problem among the entities dealing with economic zones need to be addressed. In conclusion, he held hope that World Bank would work with the government to address those issues.

Mr. Rodrigo Cubero, Deputy Division Chief in the Asia and the Pacific Department of IMF made a few remarks on the present scenario of the country's economy and its future challenges. Appreciating the government's prudent macroeconomic policies including the low inflation as well as the low debt-GDP ratio, he remarked that the IMF's extended credit facility (ECF) was successfully completed in October 2015. He also highlighted some challenges of the economy. According to him, private investment has been stagnant along with the slowdown in credit would be a challenging issues for Bangladesh. Tax-GDP ratio is one of the lowest in the world. The 7th Five Year Plan requires more resources and public investment needs to be enhanced in the area of critical infrastructure including power and transport. Domestic resource mobilization needs to be boosted up to a great extent, he commented. To this end, improvement and simplification of tax system, expansion of the direct tax base, both personal and corporate, and improvement in the area of VAT are crucially important. A number of reforms in the area of public financial management, such as, improvement of budgetary system, improvement of the reporting system of the state-owned entities including Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, strengthening of the financial sector supervision and monitoring, and improvement of the investment climate are needed. The social safety net program needs to be further expanded, he added.

Mr. Mahub Ahmed, Senior Secretary, Finance Division, Ministry of Finance stated that Bangladesh's progress over the last 6 years was very impressive. The stable macroeconomic situation for the last few years was due to the government's prudent macroeconomic management. He pointed out that Bangladesh economy is undergoing a transformation phase. On the one hand, it is moving from agriculture to manufacturing or service-based economy, but on the other it is moving from aid to trade development to investment-dependent country. The country has both challenges and opportunities for the sustainable growth. Resource mobilization to realize the aspiration for becoming the higher middle income economy requires reforms in many areas. He observed that efforts should emphatically be made to exploit the unutilized factors of production, the benefits of demographic dividend and the potentials of regional cooperation. The main challenge is to mobilize resources and to transform the available resources into investment towards attaining higher growth. Planned and gradual reforms to increase domestic resource mobilization, utilizing unused industrial capacity and increase productivity through skill development are among the solutions to address these challenges, he opined. Regional connectivity can unveil new opportunities for the economy to pick up. Blue economy is another opportunity for Bangladesh. The government has already taken initiatives to make use of those opportunities, he added.

Dr. Atiur Rahman, Governor of Bangladesh Bank expressed his agreement with the statement made by the presenter regarding the future opportunities and challenges of Bangladesh economy. He held great hope to achieve the targets of the 7th Five Year Plan in areas of rapid poverty reduction, job creation and GDP growth. He, however, commented that some of the areas need to be further strengthened. The notion of export-led growth will be weaker in future unless it takes opportunities of the internal and external markets. The country will need to undertake environmentally sustainable output practices and initiatives. Green transition of manufacturing is required. Anti-export bias needs to be eliminated. Domestic demand-led growth needs to be promoted. He referred to the actions undertaken by the government in the area of financial infrastructure, pension system, provisions for the non-resident Bangladeshis, and long term financing and agri-insurance. He also stated that Bangladesh Bank has undertaken proper measures for improvement of financial supervision and risk management in line with BASEL III. He also pointed out the Bank's initiatives for digital financial inclusion, broadening of access to finance, modernization of Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) system, and extension of credit service to women, SMEs, farmers etc. He informed that the government looks forward towards a deeper and stronger engagement of the development partners in these areas.

Observations of the Participants:

Recommendations from the floor included the following areas:

- Diversify Export Industries
- Create more labor employment opportunities.
- Enhance quality vocational and secondary education to take advantage of global value chain
- Improve implementation
- Strategy for quality education and an action plan for skill development
- Increase tax-base
- Anticipate problems of post-TICFA
- Good management of Stock Exchange
- Equitable distribution of wealth



Concluding Remarks by the Chair:

Hon'ble Finance Minister wrapped up the session summarizing the main points raised at the discussions. He mentioned that the government will continue the labor-intensive industrial development policy. To this end, a number of special economic zones are being established across the country. Tax reform including the expansion of tax base would be given due attention, he informed. According to him, only 1.2 million people are submitting the tax returns; this number needs to be increased to at least 2.0 million by the end of this year.

**Working Session One
Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change**

The first working session on “Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change,” was chaired by Begum Matia Chowdhury, Hon'ble Minister for Agriculture. Dr. Kamal Uddin Ahmed, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Ms. Mushfeka Ikfat, Secretary, Ministry of Food, Dr. Kundhavi Kadiresan, Regional Representative of FAO, Dr. Qazi Kholiqzaman Ahmed, Chairman of Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation were the distinguished panelists.



The Chairperson welcomed the participants to the session. She underscored agriculture as a key driving factor of the country's development and attached importance to climate linkage with agriculture.

She then requested Mr. Anwar Faruque, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture to present his keynote paper.

Mr. Anwar Faruque, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture remarked that the agriculture sector comprises 16% of the country's GDP and Bangladesh started exporting rice to the neighboring countries. He mentioned that the country's rice production has increased from 10 million metric tons in 1972 to 34.35 million metric tons in 2014. An increasing tendency is also visible in fish, meat and vegetable production. The increase in production of rice, fish and meat contributed to poverty reduction, food security and achievement of the MDG-1.

He pointed out to the successes of this sector that included the improved nutritional status; projects/programmes undertaken to tackle climate change vulnerability; improved input management; support to the mechanization of farm works; crop varieties tolerant to the stresses flood, drought, submergence, salinity, heat and cold developed; introduction of farmers' ID cards for distribution of agro-inputs; opening of farmers' bank accounts; extension of the Integrated Pest Management programme; reduction of the use of pesticides;; adoption of new molecular science; e-agriculture; and expansion of minor irrigation.

Shrinking of agricultural land; population growth; climate change impact; rapid urbanization; deficit of agricultural research and education; technology generation and dissemination; alternate livelihoods and rehabilitation programmes; inadequate post-harvest technology; inadequate value addition/food processing and marketing and increased area and intensity of salinity in the southern belt were highlighted as the major challenges of this sector.

The presenter informed that research and development; mechanization in agriculture; science-led agricultural technology systems; research-extension-farmers linkage; agricultural diversification; bio-technology in agriculture; crop zoning and land use planning; more use of surface water; post-harvest management; value chain development and use of seaweeds and aquatic plants as food have been targeted under the government's 7th Five Year Plan.

According to him, initiatives towards climate resilience technologies; innovative and integrated farming practices; short duration crops; crop diversification and cropping intensity; changing/shifting of cropping pattern; efficient water management; mechanization and management of agriculture in the hilly regions are required to address the climate change problems. He referred to Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan-2009; Annual Development Plan; Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund; bilateral assistance from the development partners; and Green Climate Fund as the major sources of funding the climate change issues. He added that the next Food Security Country Investment Plan (CIP) would give priority to climate change, natural resources, nutrition, integrated land use plan by implementing the Southern Master Plan. However, a better inter-ministerial collaboration for the CIP design; and commercialization and investment of private sector are needed for proper implementation of CIP, he argued.

Adoption of programmes for Integrate Climate Change and Food Security; investment in research & development, human resources development, technical assistance, post-harvest technology and value chain development; introduction of ICT in agriculture, coastal aquaculture and marine fisheries development, capacity development of the research institutions, dairy and cattle development; and the private sector participation in agriculture are emphasized in the key note.

Observations of the Panelists:

Dr. Kamal Uddin Ahmed, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests urged that ensuring nutrition, especially the child nutrition is one of the major challenges in the agriculture sector. Fish protein to be made available for the poor people at affordable price; reduction of over use of agricultural land; proper utilization of canals and water bodies; minimization of the use of pesticide; chemical-free food processing and preservation; introduction of high yielding crop varieties; preservation of ground water and optimum use of surface water; protection of high value agriculture land; use of organic fertilizer; and biodiversity conservation are recommended in his statement. He

sounded a note of caution on the impending decline in rice and wheat production by 2020; and the rise in sea level that would end in flood, submersion and salinity intrusion affecting the mangrove forest and 39 million people living in the coastal areas of the country.

Ms. Mushfeka Ikfat, Secretary, Ministry of Food remarked that efforts are well underway towards ensuring food security pursuant to the government's food policy. She attributed the success achieved tripling in food production compared to that of 1971. Introduction of crop varieties tolerant to salt, drought and flood; short period varieties; tackling the climate change problems; practicing healthy food habits; and proper implementation of the social safety net programmes came up in her speech as recommendations.

Dr. Kundhavi Kadiresan, Regional Representative, Asia Pacific region of FAO termed the BDF a big milestone against the backdrop of the UN's SDGs adopted in September 2015 and the upcoming Paris conference on climate change in December 2015. She appreciated the country's achievement in the agriculture sector in terms of increasing rice and food production. She, however, opined that malnutrition has posed a challenge for Bangladesh. Balanced dietary consumption for proper nutrition; realization of climate change agenda; stakeholders' engagement in policy discussions; up-scaling of the good practices like floating gardens; adequate budgetary provision for agriculture research; capacity building; better coordination between the line ministries and research institutes; and better solutions to the extreme weather condition and water logging are required, she recommended in her speech.



Dr Qazi, Kholikuzzaman Ahmed, Chairman of Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation remarked that food supply is a major policy of the government with its 7th Five Year Plan and the UN's SDGs in the backdrop. He added that food production is affected by climate change and utilization of food yet to reach to the mark. He recognized climate change as a global problem and focused on better capacity for adaptation. Given the shortage of water, he argued for more use of surface water and less use of ground water for food production although it is difficult, in practice, as the *Boro* rice is produced by using ground water and the *Aman* rice is affected by

variability of rain water. In his opinion, per capita of water is sufficient in Bangladesh but it is not available throughout the year, especially in the period of April-March.

According to him, prioritization is necessary in the case of adaptation through reconstructing Bangladesh Climate Change Action Plan. Water management; agricultural land declining; decrease of rice and wheat production; flood, Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna (GBM) river basin and population increasing are the major challenges in agriculture sector, he continued. Quoting India's Basin management which Bangladesh can build on, he opined that policy/planning of Bangladesh is at good stage but identification of constraints and challenges are necessary. Better coordination among the relevant agencies of the government; coordination between the government and NGOs; internal partnership among the stakeholders; best utilization of land; detailed research on agriculture with regard to climate change for food production; technologies, preservation of quality of land; local research in respect of climate change; and measures to safe livestock from the affect of climate change were recommended in his statement.

Observations of the Participants:

The participants suggested that more emphasis on livestock and fisheries should be given in the 7th Five Year Plan to fulfill the nutrition requirements; mitigation measures should be taken besides the measures for adaptation; appropriate policy should be developed to grow more wheat given the recent change in people's food habits; climate change and agriculture should be considered together; nutrition deficit should seriously be addressed; and proper financing of the agro-technologies is needed.

They also suggested the following, among other things:

- Livestock and fisheries should be given equal importance.
- Bangladesh is taking actions against Greenhouse Gas Emissions, not only adaptations.
- Changing food habit necessitates that we should look at increasing crops like maize.
- There is inter-sectoral links between food safety and climate change.
- Role of rural finance in adopting new technology
- How should the issues of growth and climate change should be linked

Response from the Presenter and Panelists:

The presenter and panelists commented that shifting of the *Boro* rice cultivation from the country's northern region where deep tube wells are used for extraction of ground water to its southern region where surface water is available; and cultivation of potato, *Aoush* crops and high yielding varieties in the northern region would help mitigate the problem of water crisis. They also suggested a decrease in the *Urea* use and more use of organic fertilizer to preserve land quality; livestock and fisheries development; marine fisheries development; increase in vegetable production; and increased maize cultivation besides wheat import. It was further argued that large amount of emission of greenhouse gases by the developed countries caused climate change problems.

Concluding remarks by the Chair



The Chair thanked the participants for their constructive comments. She referred to the provisions for easy bank loans, semi-commercial agricultural loans and rural agricultural loans for the farmers; crop zoning map; less use of ground water; decrease of pesticide import; organic farming initiatives; family farming (one house one farm); development of a number of crop varieties; National Agriculture Policy-2013; Comprehensive Agriculture Development Plan for the country's southern region; climate change trust fund; online agricultural service; bio-technology; and blending of maize with wheat.

She expressed confidence in her government's capability to feed 160 million people of Bangladesh.

Working Session Two: Strengthening the Economic Foundation: Strategies for Development of Infrastructure

This session was chaired by Mr. A H M Mustafa Kamal, Hon'ble Minister for Planning while Mr. Md. Abul Kalam Azad, Principal Secretary, Prime Minister's Office, Professor Dr. Jamilur Reza Choudhury, Vice Chancellor of University of Asia Pacific, Mr. Toru ARAI, Director-General, South Asia, JICA HQ and Mr. Anthony Jude, Director of Asian Development Bank were on the panel.

The Chair welcomed the participants and requested Mr. Arastoo Khan, Member of Planning Commission to give a presentation on the topic.



In his key note presentation, Mr. Khan referred to the government's efforts towards realizing its Vision 2021, Perspective Plan 2010-2021 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Mr. Khan mentioned that 7FYP gives the direction on what the country wants to achieve in next five years. Referring to SDG-7 linked to energy sector and SDG-9 linked to transport and ICT sectors, he also briefly discussed the recent achievements and targets for these sectors for the next five years (2016-2020). While highlighting the achievements of energy sector, he mentioned that as per the rule of thumb 1% GDP growth creates demand for 1.5% electricity growth. Due to adaptation of strong and well-rounded reform programme during the 6th FYP period (2011-2015), the power generation capacity of the country increased by 132% to 13,540 MW against the target of 15,457 MW. At the same period per capita power generation increased by 69% to 371 KW against the target of 360 KW. Access to electricity increased to 72% from 48% surpassing the target 71%. Efficiency gained through reducing system loss to 13.03% from 16% against the target of 13.75%. Private investment in the sector increased to 43% from 36% which is close to the target 44%. Energy trade of 500 MW started with India.

Discussing on the major areas of concern in the power and primary energy sector, he pointed out to the issue of substantial increase in the marginal cost of electricity generation which is due to increased use of liquid fuel (oil) from 8% in 2010 to 29% in 2015. Liquid fuel is costlier than any other fuel sources like gas and coal, but supply of the latter two options was far less than the requirement. Pointed out to the gas shortage he mentioned the share of gas in power production fell from 84% in FY2010 to 63% in FY2015. He suggested the possible cost effective options, such as, exploration of new gas fields, increase coal-based power production (use of coal now only 2%), nuclear power and import power from neighboring countries. Mentioning the target of producing additional 12,584 MW during the 7th FYP with a more homogeneous mixture of energy, he added that depletion of reserved natural gas, limited options for solar and wind energy, high capital cost of nuclear energy are some of the major challenges of Bangladesh in this sector. He put importance for natural gas exploration and distribution, import of LNG and coal, improvement of regional grid interconnection and distribution network, development of manpower skills in energy sector. Given the shortfall in domestic gas, a judicious combination of choices relating to domestic supply options and import options will need to be made to ensure the efficient and cost-effective supply of primary energy during the 7th Five Year Plan. He added that adoption of green energy technology, enhancing the skills of manpower and improving corporate governance of energy entities are the ways of overcoming challenges in energy sector.

He highlighted the achievement in transport sector which includes sectorial growth of 6.20%, approval of National Land Transport Policy 2013, Road Fund Board Act 2013, and Railway Master Plan 2010 during the 6th FYP. Construction of new roads of 923 km, improvements/rehabilitations of 5,355 km, construction/reconstruction of bridges & culverts of 60,253 km, expanded and improved railway track of 1,262 km including 164 km new line, dredging of 3,000 km to facilitate inland water transport and 10% construction completed of Padma Multipurpose bridge are the other important achievements of this sector. He mentioned that the 7th FYP sets the targets of 8% growth with timely completion of all

on-going roads and bridges. Top priority on fast tracking of transformational infrastructure investment in line with the Vision 2021 has been given priority including Padma Multipurpose Bridge, Deep Sea Port Project, Mass Rapid Transit-6 project, LNG terminal project, Payra Port Project, Rooppur Nuclear Power Project, Rampal Coal Power Project and Matarbari Coal Power Project, Dhaka Elevated Expressway, improvement of the multimodal transport network with a significant increase in the share of rail and waterways traffic, reduction of urban traffic congestion with focus on Dhaka and Chittagong Metropolitan areas and reduction of the incidence of road accidents. More priority areas include regional connectivity, Trans-Asian Highway Project; capacity building of Chittagong port and civil aviation etc.

Mentioning the challenges in this sector including the challenge of developing a balanced 3R- Rail, River and Road multimodal transport system, he stressed the adequate financing for planning and implementing Mass Rapid Transits, Bus Rapid Transits(BRTs), Elevated Expressways in Dhaka city, Gauge unification & double tracking of major rail corridors and expansion, dredging and maintaining major inland waterways, building new sea ports/deep sea ports, relocation of industries and building new export processing zones near ports.

With reference to the government's vision of digital Bangladesh and achievements in ICT sector including adoption of different ICT related acts and policies; Mr. Khan mentioned that 7th FYP sets the target to spend 1% of GDP for research and development. In 7th FYP, the government has planned to increase the proportion of government primary schools with a computer laboratory facility, improve tele-density to 100% and expand broad band coverage of the internet to 35% which demand more support from development partners, he added.

Observations of the Panelists:

Mr. Md. Abul Kalam Azad, Principal Secretary, Prime Minister's Office emphasized on the coal-based power generation with the use of ultra-super critical technology along with other options. Modern technology can be used to achieve energy efficiency, he pointed out. According to him, regional connectivity needs to be strengthened in road, rail and water sectors. More exploration is needed in gas sector. This can be done by adjusting gas price, providing incentives for internal exploration, etc. He emphasized the necessity of new technology in construction, particularly in the road sector so that water-proof road can be built. Speedy railway is also essential. Elevated expressway needs to be materialized. Private sector needs to be involved in the core businesses of railway. Circular road around the city of Dhaka needs to be fully operationalized. Metro-rail needs to be put into operation as early as possible. River dredging is also important for Bangladesh as siltation occurs every year. He informed that Mongla Port is now a 9-meter depth that requires increasing the 18-meter depth. Regarding information technology, it is considered necessary to move from 3G to 4G. Post offices should be transformed as digital centers. Public-Private partnership has been initiated long time ago, but it is not effectively working. All laws and regulations are in place relating to economic zones, High Tech Park and PPP. He stated that huge investment is required in the infrastructure sector of the country. To make the country a upper middle income one substantial support from the development partners is needed.

Mr. Jamilur Reza Chowdhury narrated the present scenario of infrastructure development with historical background. He informed that base-isolation technology will be used for the construction of Padma Bridge so that it can move a certain level during earthquake. Geo-textile bags will also be used. He mentioned that Padma Bridge is one of the important architectures of the world which is using the latest technology. He expressed his concern over the quality of building construction in the major cities in the country. Large number of buildings may collapse due to a moderate earth quake. Here vulnerability is very high. He also expressed his concern over land acquisition and resettlement process which causes delay for most of the projects at least by three years. Revision of RSTP(Rapid Spanning Tree Protocol) is now underway. He added that six MRTs, two BRTs, three ring roads and expressways will be constructed in Dhaka city to ease the traffic. Dhaka is blessed with four rivers. These blessings should be fully utilized. But, wrong types of water vessels were deployed. He cautioned on the use of coal energy particularly about Rampal project, which is argued to inflict permanent damage to the forests of Sundarbans in the nearby area. Department of Environment has identified 64 conditions. Government should give clear statement how these

conditions are fulfilled. He suggested that possibility of accident during transport of coal needs to be taken into cognizance.



Mr. Toru Arai, DG of JICA emphasized on the quality infrastructure development for achieving quality growth so that benefits of growth can be passed on to the poorer section of people. He stated that infrastructure gap remains the major challenge for social and economic development of Bangladesh. He suggested that the infrastructure gap needs to be met up in such a way that promotes inclusive, sustainable and resilient growth. Strategic infrastructure planning; effective resource mobilization; adequate environment and social safeguard; and consideration of lifecycle cost, safety and resilience against disasters are the important aspects for quality infrastructure development in Bangladesh, he remarked. He opined that there is much room for working together among the development partners in stocktaking and knowledge-sharing in order to mainstream the quality of infrastructure in Bangladesh.

Mr. Anthony Jude of ADB apprised that ADB has been supporting the development efforts Bangladesh since quite a long, its infrastructure sector included. Regarding coal-based power plant he requested the government to prepare a clear policy guideline whether it will use super critical or ultra critical technology. Capacity of operating such technology should be taken into consideration. He urged the government to strengthen its regulatory capacity. On the demand side, policy should also be put in place. Regarding the LNG how consumer will get pricing right needs to be properly defined. He emphasized the need for strengthening regional cooperation with neighboring countries. He stated that joint collaboration could improve energy security. Energy security should be considered over a long term perspective without depending on one source. He suggested necessary reforms in the areas of power and energy sectors to bring private sector investments.

Observations of the Participants:

It was suggested that comprehensive approach needs to be taken for the infrastructure development of Bangladesh. Emphasis was given on strengthening governance and knowledge institutions. A number of discussants also focused on how risk management can be made the core aspect of infrastructure development. The issues of strengthening economic foundations like economic zones and ports; addressing irregular migration; and framing land use policy were also discussed.

The participants also suggested the following:

- There are discrepancies on various figures of losses being incurred for traffic congestion.
- Illegal migration is a source of concern. Some EPZs can be established in migration-prone districts.
- We need to have a comprehensive national land use policy before we go for indiscriminate road expansion.

Concluding remarks by the Chair:

The Chair stressed upon the need for making infrastructure more resilient and sustainable. He stated that the government incorporated the resilience aspect in the planning process. He acknowledged the progress so far made in this area. He further opined that BDF is very important platform for analyzing the country's economy and development strategies. He emphasized the need for underground train in Dhaka city. He welcomed the development partners to help the government of Bangladesh in this effort.



**Working Session Three:
Governance and Development: Strengthening Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation**

This session was chaired by Dr. Mashiur Rahman, Economic Adviser to Hon'ble Prime Minister. Mr. Md. Shahidul Haque, Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Md. Mahiuddin Khan, Additional Secretary, Cabinet Division, H.E. Mr. Pierre Mayaudon, Ambassador and the Head of EU Delegation, Professor Mustafizur Rahman, Executive Director of Centre for Policy Dialogue, Professor Syed Munir Khasru, Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka, and the Institute for Policy, Advocacy and Governance (IPAG) were on the panel.



Mr. Mohammad Mejbahuddin, Senior Secretary of ERD presented the key note paper. In his presentation, he highlighted the strength of the country's economy featuring the low aid dependency syndrome. He, however, remarked that both domestic as well as external resources for the development of the country would be needed to realize the SDGs at the national level. It was mentioned that good governance plays an important role in getting the desired level of development though there is a debate if good governance brings development or development comes as a result of good governance.

He referred to the government's National Integrity Strategy; Grievance Redress System; Whistle Blowers' Protection Act; Human Rights Commission; Citizen Charter; Annual Performance Agreement; Aid Information Management System Web Portal; Public Financial Management; Parliament Strengthening and Digitization; E-governance; E-procurement and access to Information; Improved Development Results Framework; and Independent Judiciary as examples towards the ongoing march for good governance.

He informed that the amount of average ODA commitment has registered more than USD 5 billion over the last couple of years. A changing pattern is also seen in the grant-loan ratio of the country's external aid. Hence, time has come to rethink the role of ODA for ensuring development goals of Bangladesh, he argued. According to him, ODA may be used as a catalyst for mobilization of other

types of resources for infrastructure development; private sector engagement; strengthening of tax system; and improvement of supply capacity and productivity etc. Effective use of ODA may be ensured through strengthening the government's capacity to realize the global development goals and human capacity development; and promoting regional cooperation, he continued.

In relation to that diversified fields of actions on ensuring strong accountability through integrity institutions like National Human Right Commission, Information Commission, Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General etc.; stronger internal control on performance and value for money; full implementation of National Integrity Strategy; Public Financial Management and public expenditure reform; broadening tax base and private investment; reducing approval time for Development Project Proposals/Technical Project Proposals, strengthening project implementation capacity and project readiness; using Local Consultative Group as a platform for implementation of SDGs and the government's 7th Five Year Plan were mentioned in the presentation.

More use of the country systems; programme-based approaches; harmonization and joint programming for efficient use of resources; implementation of the Bussan principles: national ownership and alignment focusing on development results, inclusiveness, transparency & accountability; holistic approach to capacity development; bilateral and multilateral support to more solid institutions & implementation capacity; and catalytic role of ODA: leveraging private and domestic resources; strengthening accountability institutions were highlighted by the presenter.

He concluded the presentation having said that registering collective ownership based on Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda; a reformulated and updated Joint Cooperation Strategy can be taken to phase out the impediments towards achieving SDGs and strengthening the monitoring of the 7th Five Year Plan and good governance issues with tools of effective development partnerships and aid utilization.

Observations of the Panelists:

Mr Shahidul Haque, Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs critically observed the development agenda, achievable through implementation of SGDs by 2030; and the ways to fit ODA into those. Drawing a comparison between MDGs and SDGs, he argued that there exists a huge difference between the two agenda. The goals and targets of SDGs are rather vast and ambitious compared to those of MDGs, he opined. The issue of geo-politics and geo-economy in determining the flow of ODA to the LDCs is crucially important. He added that implementation of the SDGs by 2030 requires huge preparation. In this context, departure of traditional flow of ODA towards some emerging issues like climate change, migrations are getting more importance. He also mentioned that the recipient country's relation with the main actors of the global partnership and security concerns also plays important role. Optimisms about South-South Cooperation, innovative and new financing issues, competition, compliances, and foundation /equity fund as new mechanisms of financial flow also occupied his deliberation. Time has come to revisit the whole agenda and cooperation of ODA, he remarked. In relation to global partnership, universality and differentiation in terms of capacity building and shared responsibility are increasingly followed. Hence, the goals and targets of global partnership should be based upon these two principles, besides negotiations, he commented.

H.E. Mr. Pierre Mayaudon, Ambassador & the Head of EU Delegation noted that though Bangladesh has achieved impressive successes in various macroeconomic indicators, poverty is still the most daunting tasks to address. He pointed out that rule of law, accountability, transparency are the crucial concerns to make Bangladesh become an inclusive society. According to him, a functionally independent Anti-Corruption Commission, Election Commission, Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, enabling environment for the Civil Society Organizations, implementation of National Integrity Strategy, Grievance Redress Systems would be required to ensure good governance. He went on to say that these organizations should be promoted and protected through establishing ICT,

freedom of expression, freedom of association. Also, it is the time to initiate and implement fully the Right to Information Act, Integrity Focal Point, and Ethics Committee to establish good governance in Bangladesh, the Ambassador remarked.

Moreover, social protection, access to justice, strengthening of Information Commission and independent media monitoring could enhance good governance in the society. In addition to that, he spoke in favour of putting in place a comprehensive Land Reform System and Land Policy; improved Labor Rights and occupational safety. Launching an operative Public Financial Management in national as well as local level will ultimately enhance the social service delivery and public investment in a more targeted manner, he held hope. A Governance Assessment Framework is needed to be developed through an open dialogue encompassing all stakeholders for uplifting the Justice Sector which would be more aligned with the SDG attainments. Rigorous coordination, aid efficacy and capacity build-up could facilitate the good governance path and development in a newer height, he added.

Mr. Md. Mahiuddin Khan, Additional Secretary, Cabinet Division elaborated on the good governance initiatives undertaken by the Cabinet Division under the purview of the government's National Integrity Strategy. He referred to improved service delivery system developed by the country's state and non-state institutions under the NIS framework. The action plan and monitoring framework action plan for the NIS implementation on a short, medium and long-term basis; grievance redress system; web based software and associated guidelines; second generation Citizen Charter; Annual Performance Agreement for the ministries and its possible expansion to the field offices; and Cabinet Division's readiness to support the implementation of Right to Information featured his deliberation.

Professor Mustafizur Rahman, Executive Director of Centre for Policy Dialogue, a think tank organization observed that Bangladesh has entered into the category of middle income country that resulted in from the country's impressive achievements in its macroeconomic stability. According to Mr. Rahman, this is a high time to realistically assess the key challenges to transmit the current macro-economic stability to a higher level of economic growth of the country. He sounded cautions that the estimates of the per capita income threshold would downsize the privileges as provided for the LDCs. Forecasting that the ODA conditionality might get harder and duty free/ quota free market access may be limited, he put emphasis on appropriate strategies for effective and efficient mobilization and utilization of external resources; and strengthening of regional cooperation for improvement of connectivity. Increase in the revenue-GDP as well as tax-GDP ratio; appointment of Ombudsman in pursuit of the NIS implementation; reformation of the Local Government Institutions are the crucial areas to concentrate on, he opined. He concluded his remarks expressing hopes for a better partnership towards the implementation of the government development agenda.

Syed Munir Khasru, Professor of Policy, Advocacy and Governance at Institute of Business Administration of University of Dhaka argued for the need to identify the missing links with a view to trigger the SDG targets. He also spoke about the enforcement aspect of the governance issues and the need for judicial reforms citing the Indian examples of time bound action plans to clear the backlog of cases. Timely implementation of NIS and development projects; rigorous monitoring mechanism; fair practices in procurement; and private sector's engagement in development activities; and political will would produce the expected development results, he observed.

Comments of the participants:

The huge agenda for development requires prioritization and synergy, the floor suggested. It was noted that the issues of human rights; inclusive and sustainable society; innovation and transformation; freedom of expression and freedom of association; and reforms in the Judiciary; strong monitoring and evaluation system; a unified national statistical system for regular assessment



of the progress of 7FYP as well as the SDGs; internalization of ODA in the country's system and its use for private sector's involvement would be the prime movers.

Senior Secretary of ERD clarified that the country's existing system does not permit ODA to be used for the private sector—it could rather be used to bring the private sector investments in development interventions through partnership, especially in the area of infrastructure development. He, however, remarked that a large

amount of ODA is used towards financing the social sector's development initiatives. Mutual cooperation among all the actors in the development endeavors through strengthening good governance would help achieve the SDGs, he noted.

Changing pattern of global private sectors and their profit-making motives; accuracy of data in the national statistical system; deliverables of the justice system; frequent transfer of project directors; delay in land acquisition for development projects were also flagged up.

The participants also suggested the following:

- There is need for capacity development which needs to go with enabling environment in governance. We should discuss trade-offs and synergies in ODA. The public space should have the necessary freedom.
- We need to strengthen our statistical capabilities. It is a mainstay for all our policies and strategies.
- Justice sector needs reform and can benefit from closely partnering with NGOs who have better capacity in the sector. DPs will also be willing to assist.

Concluding remarks by the Chair:



The Hon'ble Chair stressed the need for export diversification; removal of quota and other trade barriers; provision for country-specific external aid and foreign trade; careful strategy for an increase in tax and duties; e-tendering, e-governance, e-commerce and performance audit for better implementation of the NIS; balance between accountability and responsibility; provision for a single procedure of aid inflow depending on the project sizes; quality financing of projects; mutual engagement and strong partnership for aid effectiveness; and consideration of cultural factors.

**Working Session Four:
Health and Quality Education: Offering a Secure Future for All**

This session was chaired by Mr. Abul Maal A. Muthith, Hon'ble Minister for Finance. Dr. Navaratnasamy Paranietharan, Country Representative of WHO, Mr. Jeff Nankivell, Director General of Trade and Development, Canada, Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, Founder and Chairperson of BRAC, and Mr. Mesbah ul Alam, Secretary of Ministry of Primary and Mass Education were the panelists.

Syed Monjurul Islam, Secretary of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Chowdhury Mufad Ahmed, Additional Secretary of Ministry of Education presented the keynote papers on health and education respectively.

Welcome remarks by the Hon'ble Chair

The Hon'ble Chair welcomed the speakers of the keynote papers, panelists and participants in the session. He informed that the government attached great importance to the development of health and education sectors. In his opinion, these two sectors play key roles for human resources development that ultimately results in ensuring quality lives and in achieving the government's development targets in pursuit of its the vision 2021. He then requested the keynote speakers to give their important presentations.



Health:

Mr. Islam informed that the government has demonstrated its strong commitment for providing basic healthcare services to the citizens by adopting National Health Policy 2011; National Population Policy 2012; National Nutrition Policy 2014; ratifying MDGs and SDGs; and recognizing health as a priority sector in the Five Year Plans pursuant to its Vision 2021. In his presentation, he focused on the good progress made in improving health outcomes; life expectancy increased to 70.4 years; on-track progress in the MDG-4; decrease in under-5 mortality rate; reduction of maternal mortality rate; remarkable progress in reduction of malnutrition; child mortality reduction; and use of ICT to access healthcare services.

He referred to the ministry's SWAP programmes designed to facilitate an integration of the key services in the areas of family planning and maternal and child health care for reduction of maternal and child mortality; to strengthen of the support systems for the timely procurement of essential drugs and equipment; and to introduce an efficient service delivery mechanism. Shortage of nurses, paramedics, mid-wives and technicians in the health sector and unequal distribution of human resources in rural-urban areas poses challenges, he observed. He informed that the government has undertaken the 4th sector programme with the objective of ensuring quality and equitable healthcare for all citizens under the purview of its Vision 2012 that would virtually help realize the SDGs related to this sector. Universal health care as envisaged under this programme is based on three principles,

such as, quality; equity; and efficiency, he added. The programme also included the activities towards strengthening governance and stewardship over the public and private health care facilities; enhancing core health system capacity; establishing equitable access to quality health service; and promoting healthy lifestyle choices under a healthy environment.

Education:

Chowdhury Mufad Ahmed, Additional Secretary of Ministry of Education presented the keynote paper on education. In his presentation, he highlighted the country's performance in the areas of access to education and gender parity. He informed that enrolment in primary education and higher education reached to 97.7% and 62.25% respectively in 2014. Besides, enrolment in technical and vocational education increased from around 6% to around 15% since 2010 and youth literacy rate improved from 64% to 80% during the same period. Adult (15-45) literacy rate increased from 47.9 % in 2001 to 59.8% in 2013 and enrolment of girls in technical education increased by 44% since 2010. Pupil-teacher ratio has significantly been improved.

According to him, there remain some areas for further improvement under the country's "Education for All" programme. These include reducing dropout rate in both primary and secondary levels; gender gap in adult literacy and in vocational as well as technical education; pupil-teacher ratio of 40:1 at primary level and 37:1 at secondary levels; and geographical discrepancies between rural and urban areas. Reaching out to children; ensuring quality education; decreasing drop-out rates in both primary and higher education; increasing student-teacher ratio; providing quality trainings to all teachers; and developing skills for employment are the major challenges. Hence, effective planning is required in education sector to achieve the SDGs. He underscored the need for adequate financing of the sector while the SDGs have no financial targets for education spending.

Flexible and realistic strategies with adequate funding; importance attached to non-formal mode of education; holistic cross-sectorial approaches; quality education; increased enrollment of extremely poor, geographically and socially marginalized children; Put importance on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and number of TVET student increased manifold; skill development for employment; market-oriented trainings; sustained gender parity in primary and secondary levels; sectorial approach in education; and prudent use of resources are required to pursue the National Education Policy 2010 in line with the government's 7th Five Year Plan, he observed.

Observations of the Panelists:

Dr. Navaratnasamy Paranietharan, Country Representative of WHO remarked that Bangladesh has made tremendous progress in health sector before its elevation to the upper middle class category by 2121. This demonstrated the government's dynamic leadership, prudent vision and firm determination. He appreciated the government's 4th sector program in health, population and nutrition, which places paramount importance on introducing innovative measures to tackle the major challenges, and on pursuing partnerships with other health actors and sectors with a view to maximize the impact of spending on health. The programme aims at the principles of equity, efficiency and quality underling the three core priorities: (i) increase in domestic spending for health; (ii) improvement in number, distribution and quality of the health workforce; and (iii) strengthening of governance and stewardship role of the government in health sector. He reiterated the support of the development partners towards achieving the country's universal health coverage.

Mr. Jeff Nankivell, Director General of Trade and Development commended the country's performance in education sector. Increasing the number of government primary schools; distributing free textbooks to all students; and expanding the stipend program for female and disadvantaged students; sector-wide approaches for primary education; and results-based management and financing demonstrated the government's strong commitment to Education for All, he remarked.

Increase in equitable access to quality education and vocational trainings; improvement in basic literacy and numeracy at all age levels; and quality enhancement of the graduates; development of a motivated and skilled workforce of teachers; assurance of a safe and gender-appropriate learning facilities and the right-to-education; provision for valuable technical and vocational learning opportunities; and rationalization of the curriculum of primary, secondary, technical and madrasah educations were emphasized in his statement. He argued for the commitment of the national government and the development partners to this end.

Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, Founder and Chairperson of BRAC stressed the need for more resource allocation in education sector; and proper utilization of the allocated resources. He remarked that Bangladesh has almost achieved the access to education for all; however, quality in education is yet to be ensured. For quality assurance in education, recruitment of high quality teachers is crucially important, he mentioned. National Teaching Service Commission for recruitment of qualified teachers; technical education for skills development; recruitment of teachers good at science subjects and mathematics; and merger of two ministries of primary and secondary educations into one were suggested in his statement.

He spoke in favour of adequate budgetary allocation for the universal health coverage programme to pursue the government's 7th Five Year Plan and the global SDGs. Reduction of maternal mortality rate; recruitment and training of 10,000 midwives; and reduction of malnutrition were recommended in his speech.

Mr. Mesbahul Alam, Secretary of Ministry of Primary and Mass Education reiterated the government commitment towards universal and quality education in reference to different policies adopted by the government. He then concentrated on the remarkable achievements in Primary Education Development Project and requested for its further funding.

Observations of the Participants:



It was suggested that quality human resources are required for ensuring quality education and providing quality health services for all. It was also suggested that the budgetary allocation should significantly be increased in both education and health sectors. There should also be a skill development policy.

The participants also mentioned the following:

- There is a national skills development policy which needs to be recognized by all ministries as it concerns them all.
- Education is a public good. We can consider an education cess to finance the gap in resources.
- Universal coverage for health and education should consider vulnerable groups in places like tea gardens and the CHT.
- School Health Service is very important, a doctor visiting a school and screening for major problems once a year would be a great help.

Concluding remarks by the Hon'ble Chair:

The Hon'ble Chair thanked the presenters, panelists and other participants for their valuable comments. He stressed upon the need for quality human resources in order to attain the country's upper middle income status by 2021 as envisaged in its Vision 2021. In this regard, he mentioned that the government has considered education and health as priority sectors and given due attention in terms of providing budgetary allocation and policy support. He closed the session requesting the development partners for their continued support towards these two important sectors.

**Working Session Five:
Social Protection: Leaving No One Behind**

Mr. Mohammad Mejbahuddin, Senior Secretary of ERD chaired the session. Mr. Tariq-Ul-Islam, Secretary of Ministry of Social Welfare; Ms. Sarah Cooke, Country Representative of DFID; Mr. Bijoy Bhattacharjee, Additional Secretary of Cabinet Division; Mr. Robert Watkins, UN Country Representative and Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman, Executive Chairman of Power and Participation Research Centre were on the panel.



Dr. Shamsul Alam, Member of Planning Commission presented the keynote paper. In his presentation, he mentioned that the government has adopted National Social Security Strategy-2015 to provide support to the vulnerable and poverty-stricken people for their livelihoods despite the country's significant achievement in poverty reduction. However, the focus of social protection has shifted from relief and handout to development and income-generating activities. The strategy has a broader Social Development Framework aiming at equity and social justice.

He pointed out to the challenges which need to be addressed over the next five years. These are: (a) a shift from current discretionary to a targeted universal approach; expanding coverage of core (b) able people, focusing on mother and child, core poor and most vulner- for the hard schemes progressive but (c) ;ly and people with disabilities adolescent and youth, working age, the elde that offer real and direct income earning ation' programmesscaling up of the 'gradu substantive vulnerable women are provided with income security and suring that the mosten (d) ;opportunities cial insurance system to coverInitiating a so (to engage in the labour market; (e) greater opportunities residents of expanding coverage to (ty, unemployment and maternity; (f)the risks of old age, disabili strengthening the delevery (h) e system; andan effective disaster respons ensuring (g) ;urban areas .advanced Management Information Systems systems by establishing A total of 35.7 million poor and vulnerable people will benefit from the various life cycle based programmes. According to him, five thematic clusters, such as, Social Allowances; Food security and Disaster Assistance; Social Insurance; Labour/Livelihood Intervention; and Human Development and Social Empowerment for better coordination among ministries responsible for the programme implementation will be introduced. The implementing ministries will work closely with the local government institutes and NGOs for efficient implementation of the programme. The strategy would provide a framework for broader engagement between the government and development partners in the area of social

security. By adopting this strategy, the government has already initiated actions towards the SDG of social protection and equality, he pointed out specifically.

Observations of the Panelists:

Mr Tariq-UI-Islam, Secretary of Ministry of Social Welfare took pride in his ministry's long history of providing social protection to the vulnerable and poor people.

He informed that 5 million people including abandoned children, orphanages, disabled people, widows, and old people have been brought under the social safety net coverage. Efforts are underway towards targeting the transgendered people. It was mentioned that the local representatives select the beneficiaries for the programmes.

Ms. Sarah Cooke, Country Representative of DFID suggested that expansion of the existing safety net programme to reach out to the poorest women and children of the remote areas; identification of the actual needs of the poor and distressed people; poor people's awareness about nutrition; efficient system for information gathering, monitoring and evaluation. Effective coordination among the government, development partners and civil society organization; technical and financial assistance towards the programme by the development partners; NGOs involvement in grievance redress mechanism; and efficient partnership between the government and NGOs need to be considered for the success of the safety net programme occupied her focus of discussion.

Mr Bijoy Bhattacharjee, Additional Secretary of the Cabinet Division stressed the need for effective utilization of allocated resources for the programme. He informed the audience of the government's initiatives to introduce pension fund and social insurance. Initiative has also been taken to make human assets of the vulnerable groups. There remain some crucial concerns such as meticulous targeting, selection of right intervention for the right people, real time soft data and inadequate IT systems, lack of quality skill development trainings for vulnerable groups to be economically competent and market-oriented, he observed.

Mr. Robert Watkins, UN Country Representative appreciated the government's adoption of National Social Security Strategy. He, however, put emphasis on the need for bringing vulnerable women and children into the labor force by providing them necessary supports; empowering the vulnerable groups; maximizing the safety net coverage; and verifying the beneficiaries' eligibility properly. He spoke about involvement of the civil society organizations, media and social activists in the programme. Micro-business and self-employment may work positively for the success of this programme, he hoped.

Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman, Executive Chairman of Power and Participation Research Centre stressed upon linking the safety net strategy with SDGs to reduce the existing inequality and poverty and to boost up the resilience of the vulnerable people. The leakages in the existing system should be identified and a system has to be developed to find out a new form of vulnerability. For example, the poor and the left out in the ethnic and minor groups in the society are not adequately focused in the present system, he observed. Poverty owing to poor health should get proper attention. He also advised for an improved and delivery focused innovations, regular monitoring, fair selection of the beneficiaries; identification of the design flaws; and avoidance of the poorly conceived programmes.

Observations of the Participants

It was suggested that the safety net program should target women and girls being vulnerable as a result of climate change; family planning as an issue of concern in the social security system; terminally sick people; and the transgender people. Recommendations were also made for the timely social protection for the old and disable people; segregation of the permanently disadvantaged groups from the temporary ones for efficient delivery of service; and graduation of the vulnerable groups.

Concluding remarks by the Chair:

The Chair remarked that proper coordination among different organizations to carry out the social safety strategy; effective techniques for better targeting; use of ICT to prevent leakages in the system; reduction of permanent dependency of the able-bodied people on the programmes; improvement in the service delivery mechanism; involvement of the civil society organizations and media; and decentralization of the monitoring and evaluation system would facilitate the programme implementation.

**Working Session Six:
Mainstreaming Gender in Economic Development**

Ms. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Speaker of the Parliament chaired the session. Ms. Meher Afroze Chumki, Hon'ble State Minister for Ministry of Women and Children Affairs; Ms. Irene Wennemo, Deputy Minister for Labour, Sweden; Ms. Farah Kabir, Country Director of Action Aid Bangladesh; Ms. Christine Hunter, Country Representative of UN Women Bangladesh; and Ms. Nazmunnesa Mahtab, Professor of Women and Gender Studies at University of Dhaka were on the panel.



As opening remarks, the chair of the session revealed that women are important agent of development. Women contribute around 60-70% in producing food of the country. So, women cannot be ignored in the process of development. In the meantime, government has taken steps toward income generation, gender parity, and perspective plan for women. She has pointed out that there is still disparity between genders in the area of income, most of the women income is less than \$1 per day; access to wealth including land; share of representation in the corporate sector; violence, and discrimination in every sphere. She has opined that we need to think beyond stereo-type thinking for effective development of women.

After that, Ms. Nasima Begum, ndc, Secretary of Ministry of Women and Children Affairs was given the floor to present the keynote paper. She referred to the provisions of the Constitution of Bangladesh that upholds women's equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life; and International Conventions that adopted provisions for elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and right of the children. She added that the government's 7th Five Year Plan pursues the right of the women and children. That the country ranked 10th out of 136 countries for women political empowerment; achieved millennium development goals target of eradicating poverty, gender parity primary and secondary education, child and maternal mortality; women are in government and non-government organizations; and women are in local government institutions were highlighted by her. She went on to refer to the objectives and targets set by the government for gender mainstreaming, which include promoting women participation in entrepreneurship; enhancing the social safety-net programmes for poor and distressed women and children; promoting life skill training for women; expanding microcredit programme for extremely poor women; enhancing the use of ICT to promote young girls; protection and empowerment of vulnerable, marginalized and ethnic women;

reaching out to the women and children victims of violence; preventing child marriage and sexual harassment; formulation of national plan of action to end child marriage; rehabilitation of street children; enhanced access to and control over productive resources; strengthening women's decision making opportunities; recognition of women unpaid work; provisions for nominating 33% women in all tiers of political parties; and strengthening institutional supports for improving access to justice for women and children victims of violence.

The presenter mentioned further the challenges in this area which include: (i) women receive only 57% of the male wage for equal work; (ii) no recognition of unpaid work; (iii) lack of gender disaggregated data; (iv) 62% of child marriage occurs before attaining 18 years; (v) superstition and fanaticism; and (vi) trafficking in women and children.

She recommended some actions such as capacity building of national women machineries; promoting decent work environment for women; creating opportunity for women entrepreneurship; making accommodation for working women; preventing and protecting violence against women and children; mainstreaming the issues of women in various sectors; developing comprehensive management information system; enhancing connectivity through networking and video conferencing; promoting women friendly space and breast feeding corner in hospitals, shopping malls and work places; developing toilet facilities for women in institutions and public places; providing life skill training for women and youth girls through ICT; bringing more vulnerable and poor women under social safety-net programmes; preventing drop out of schools, child marriage and trafficking of women and children; improving coordination and collaboration among the stakeholders for gender equality and women empowerment.

Observations of the Panelists:

Ms. Meher Afrose Chumki, MP, Honorable State Minister, Women and Children Affairs as one of the distinguished panelists mentioned that gender equality is the high agenda of all spheres of life. Mainstreaming of women, providing necessary support for employment, ensuring gender parity of rural/marginalized women through micro credit, preventing violence against women and children, increasing women participation in the local government are among the few issues that need to be focused. She informed the audience that the policy of free education facility and scholarships, taken by government, has contributed to considerable progress in female education. Allocation of land to the poor women under social safety net program and establishment of Joyeeta Shopping Mall are also considered as significant steps toward reducing unemployment of women. The challenges unfolded by her includes: (i) child marriage: the government is committed to stop child marriage and has taken initiative to launch an Action Plan 2021-2025 to reduce child marriage; (ii) women trafficking; (iii) coordination with other ministries; (iv) recognition to unpaid services; and (v) congenial working condition, free from harassment and sexual abuse.

H.E. Irene Wennemo, Deputy Minister for Labour, Sweden welcomed the country's initiatives towards mainstreaming gender in its development path. She expressed her government's willingness to be supportive of the government's efforts towards the development of women and children. She recalled that Sweden has been beside Bangladesh as a development partner since the very independence of the country in 1971. She commended Bangladesh for its great progress in the gender sector, particularly reducing child mortality and promoting education for the girl children. In her speech, she stressed that women's economic development is most important for country's economic growth. Terming economic right for women is a human right; she said that there is globally a great momentum for the economic development of women. She pointed out that employment of women has a positive growth factor. It not only entails economic solvency, but also contributes towards the education of children, provide better opportunities for healthcare and have a far-reaching effects on family welfare. She emphasized need to remove the barriers to education, productive and decent work environment for women, and employment opportunities for women, particularly for families at risk.

Terming 'Sustainable Economic Growth and Women's Empowerment as one of the key elements in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Global Development in July 2015, she highlighted its commitment to ensure gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment, to promote peaceful and inclusive societies and to advance fully towards an equitable global economic system where no country or person is left behind, enabling decent work and productive livelihoods for all. She finally called for joint actions by the government of Bangladesh and its development partners to promote social dialogue in a spirit of trust to improve stability, and to undertake specific global development projects for women's empowerment.

Ms. Farah Kabir, Country Director of Action Aid Bangladesh reiterated that the inclusion of 50% of the female population will certainly make a difference to enable the transition of the economy to a higher level. Terming that 'Poverty has a feminine face', she called for targeted attention and special intervention by the government and the development partners for the development of women. Highlighting the impediment to women's development, she pointed out to 'Violence' being the main obstacle to women's empowerment, their education and their employment. Early marriage compels many girls to leave school and give birth to children at the age of 14 years. The female garment workers need housing/shelter, transportation, day-care centre for their young children. Women are more vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters. Therefore, more investment is needed for their welfare, she continued. The panelist also focused on the need to provide door-to-door services for women and children who have special needs. She called for monetization of women's unpaid work- giving recognition to their labour and their monetary worthiness, introduce a reward system and provide incentives to women who migrate from home to work, recognize women's leadership in the face of the prevalent tendency to undermine it, and introduce special education programme for girls between the ages of 14 to 18 years.

Ms. Christine Hunter, Country Representative of UN Women Bangladesh appreciated the strong commitment of Hon'able Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina towards mainstreaming gender. While pointing out to violence against women; child marriage; and less payment for the works done by women, she underscored the need for building partnership and investing in women; increasing women labour force up to 50% in the public sector; and strategy for skills development for employment to reap the benefits of demographic dividend. She expressed her willingness to support the government's effort towards gender mainstreaming.

Ms. Nazmunnesa Mahtab, Professor of Women and Gender Studies at University of Dhaka stressed the need for mainstreaming gender in all development programs of the government. She reiterated that the women have legitimate right to live free from violence and discrimination. She referred to the cultural factors; poor environment for education; poor nutrition; forced early marriage; abuse of fundamental rights; mobility restriction; discrimination in employment and pay; limited voice in the political arena; discrimination in inheritance rights and care crisis as the serious impediments to women's development. She suggested Gender Budgeting and adequate resource allocation; policy analysis, research and monitoring of women issues; and collective action by all stakeholders to address the gender mainstreaming issues for the economic development of the country.

Observations of the Participants:

The participants mostly echoed the observations of the panelists. The floor mentioned that there should be ample provisions for ensuring the women of Bangladesh to actually receive the benefits enshrined in the country's policies. It was observed that although there is strong commitment for addressing gender issues, gender equality is a social issue. It is very difficult to address, as social norms are very difficult to change. The root causes of backwardness should be explored and addressed, particularly focusing on education and training/capacity building. Lack of coordination is a challenge. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has an important role in this regard. It was



advised on building awareness of men folk in the work place on women's issues and inclusion of women's issues in SDGs came up in the discussion. It was noted that the society is experiencing a demographic change with the number of children declining in the families. There is considerable change in the labour market with a rising female labour force. In line with it, participation of women in IT sector was also discussed in the meeting. The meeting observed that the women are disadvantaged in power relations in every sphere

of life. Hence, there is great need to intervene and educate women, make the capable to compete, to negotiate and survive in a world with all difficulties. There must be 'zero tolerance for violence against women', the floor continued.

The participants also highlighted the following:

- Men need to be reeducated about sharing work burden with women.
- Financial rules and regulations and incentives for women are not being translated into action.
- There is a digital divide in which women are victims in global ICT. We need to ensure that the same does not happen in Bangladesh.

Concluding remarks by the Chair:

The Speaker of the Parliament, as concluding remarks, congratulated ERD for selecting all the relevant and major issues of development for discussion. She noted that comprehensive discussion was held with focus on all the components of Bangladesh, including: women's vulnerability, vulnerability to climate change, the 'face of poverty' which has a 'women's face', violence against women, child marriage, labour participation, participation in the IT sector, change in the thinking pattern of men and women, the severe need for education and ensuring health. She has pointed out that issue of vulnerability needs special attention.

She advised on priority based planning on women's issues. She said, decision needs to be made whether we should mainstream women in micro economic policies or macro-economic policies. She called for cooperation from the DPs and requested them to prioritize gender issues in providing foreign aid. She suggested further incorporating gender dimension in the project documents (DPP/PPP). She emphasized that gender issue is not only important for women only, but also important for all the development policies, including 7th Five Year Plan and SDGs. The Speaker concluded with optimism that gender equity will be at the heart of the goals of Vision 2021.

Closing Session:

The closing session was chaired by Mr. Abul Maal A. Muhith, MP, Hon'ble Minister of Finance. Mr. Md. Shahriar Alam, MP, Hon'ble State Minister for Foreign Affairs was also present as the guest of honour. Mr. Mohammad Mejbahuddin, Senior Secretary of ERD and the LCG co-chair and Ms. Janina Jaruzelski, Mission Director of USAID and the LCG Co-chair gave vote of thanks.



Ms. Janina Jaruzelski expressed satisfaction over the fruitful discussions at the BDF-2015 that would help further strengthen the partnerships between the government and development partners. She urged for the government's further efforts in providing quality infrastructure, and ensuring enhanced female participation in the workforce in order to realize the full potential of the economy. She also emphasized on improvement of health care facilities and quality education, increasing provision of cost-effective nutrition, undertaking evidence-based policy action as well as greater involvement of private sectors and civil society for establishing effective cooperation for achieving overall development goals of the country. She reiterated commitments of the development partners towards further strengthening partnerships in order to transform the country to 'Sonar Bangla'.

She extended her thanks to the government of Bangladesh particularly to the session Chairs; Senior Secretary of ERD and his team; LCG members; organizers of the development fair; working groups; and the panelists for their valuable contributions to the Forum and for making this event successful.

Mr. Mohammad Mejbahuddin, Senior Secretary of ERD termed BDF as a big event that provided ample opportunity to discuss the government's development agenda with the development partners, civil society members, development practitioners, researchers, academicians, representatives of the private sector and NGOs to deepen the understanding for better development results. He remarked that this event has been organized following the adoption of the government's 7th Five Year Plan and the UN's SDGs. He added that the Forum is critical for the future journey of Bangladesh in its development path and expressed his firm belief that it would enable the concerned to review the existing Joint Cooperation Strategy as well as develop an Action Plan for its next generation together with the development partners. He underscored the need for consideration of recommendations put forward at the Forum.

Mr. Mohammad Mejbahuddin expressed his deep gratitude to Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh for her kind presence in the Forum. Hon'ble Prime Minister visited almost all the stalls of the Development Fair and inquired about the activities of the participating organizations, he added. He also thanked Hon'ble Finance Minister for his leadership, advice and guidance towards organizing the event successfully. He extended warm gratitude to the panelists; representatives of the development partners, government agencies, NGOs, civil society organizations; academia; and all the participants for their valuable contributions in the Forum. He expressed gratitude to the LCG co-chair Ms. Janina Jaruzelski and DFID Country Representative Ms. Sarah Cook for their dedicated support. He also thanked the media for their efforts towards a wide coverage of the event. Finally, he thanked and congratulated the ERD team for their hard work to make the programme a grand success.

Mr. Md. Shahriar Alam, Hon'ble State Minister for Foreign Affairs remarked that the BDF-2015 has extensively discussed the status of Bangladesh economy and future strategies over last two days. He pointed out that a few weeks back world has adopted an integrated 2030 development agenda. For successful implementation of SDGs, it requires substantial involvement of the governments along with action at national and sub-national levels. He emphasized the need for further integration of the economy in the global value and supply chain. He also called for concerted efforts to address the climate change issues and violent extremism. Political leadership and commitment are there in mobilizing enhanced domestic resource mobilization. The government formulated its vision 2021 and to translate the vision into action the perspective plan, 7th Five Year Plan and sectoral strategies are put in place. According to him, ODA is crucial to this end. The technology transfer among the LDCs particularly in agriculture and health sectors is also important. He emphasized the need for establishing a technology bank among the LDCs in this regard. This Forum has provided an opportunity to share experiences with the development partners, he observed.



Mr. Abul Maal A. Muhith, Hon'ble Minister for Finance remarked that the six thematic sessions were held to discuss the challenges of the government's development agenda in the next five years and the possible way out of those challenges. The development goals are a bit ambitious which requires serious efforts to materialize. Efforts are being intensified in the areas of domestic resource mobilization and job creation. Institutional reforms will be further carried out to put in place a better public administration. Efforts towards augmenting power and energy will be continued. Emphasis will be given in raising the domestic demand with exploiting further export possibilities. Development partners are welcome to get involved in a strategic partnership in various sectors with the government and to assist in generating good ideas and innovations. The Hon'ble Minister also referred to the greater role private sector played in recent time in the government's overall development efforts. Their contribution would increase to 77% as envisaged in the 7th Five Year Plan. There exists an enormous scope for south-south cooperation and more attention is needed in this area. Regional cooperation does not only provide resource transfer but also solutions to tackle problems, he opined.

He pointed out that Bangladesh has already undertaken a number of regional projects with Bhutan and Nepal. Meaningful discussions with India in this regard are required to take place. This Forum has put forth a number of important recommendations which deserve the government's actions.

He thanked the participants for their constructive comments and valuable suggestions for proper implementation of the government's development agenda; and concluded the Forum.

Annexes:

Annex-1: BDF Communique

Annex-2: Development Fair

Annex-3: Press Briefing

Annex-1

BDF Communiqué

Ministers and leading representatives of Bangladesh and its development partners, multilateral, regional and bilateral development and financial institutions and civil society organizations, met in Dhaka on 15-16 November 2015 for the 2nd meeting of the Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF2015), which was inaugurated by the Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The 1st meeting of the Forum was held by the coalition Government of Sheikh Hasina in 2010.

The Government has hosted the BDF2015 at an important time. Bangladesh has just launched a 7th Five Year Plan 2016-2020 aiming to set forth a strong trajectory of inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Bangladesh in 2015 crossed the Lower Middle Income threshold, according to the World Bank classifications. Internationally, the world has just endorsed the UN's new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - 17 goals for 7 billion people, aiming to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change. The world also adopted the Addis Ababa Action Agenda in 2015, defining a series of bold measures to overhaul global finance practices and generate investments for implementing the SDGs, encompassing a diversity of sources, from domestic resource mobilization, southern finance flows and private investment as well as official development assistance. Finally, the BDF2015 is taking place only two weeks before the historic international climate conference COP21.

This Bangladesh Development Forum serves as an important platform for dialogue on ways to accelerate Bangladesh's development. The Forum allowed the Government to share its plans for achieving development and poverty reduction as set out in the Seventh Five Year Plan and in line with the SDGs. The Forum also allowed the Development Partners to share their views, and ideas. The BDF serves to affirm broad-ranging support for Bangladesh's development.

The keynote session focused on macro-economic considerations and the development of an inclusive growth strategy to ensure achievement of the SDGs. This session was followed by six thematic working sessions centering on the 7th Five Year Plan and SDG implementation, focusing on the themes:

- Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change
- Strengthening Economic Foundations: Strategies for Development of Infrastructure
- Health and Quality Education: Offering a Secure Future for All
- Governance and Development: Strengthening Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation
- Social Protection: Leaving No One Behind
- Mainstreaming Gender in Economic Development

From the lively and wide-ranging discussions, a number of issues came to the fore as being important for future economic growth and poverty reduction in Bangladesh and for supporting the transition from Least Developed Country status. For example:

- 1) Creating decent jobs and tackling the barriers to growth & investment including by strengthening high quality infrastructure (with consideration of lifecycle cost, safety and resilience to disasters, taking into account adequate environmental and social safeguards); improving the enabling environment for the private sector; building the skills base; and strengthening regional connectivity.
- 2) Building human capital as a pre-requisite for growth and poverty reduction, by improving the equity, quality and efficiency of health and education services and by emphasizing improvements in nutrition outcomes.
- 3) Strengthening social protection provision for the extreme poor, the marginalized and the most vulnerable through fewer but larger, better targeted and more efficient social protection programmes.
- 4) Enhancing women's empowerment by implementing existing laws and policies; increasing women's participation in the labour force; improving their access to productive resources; eliminating child marriage; and eliminating violence against women.
- 5) Improving Bangladesh's resilience by mainstreaming climate change issues; and taking a holistic approach to climate & disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness, including but not limited to adaptive delta management. International climate finance along with public and private financial flows creates significant opportunities for sustainable growth and inclusion.

- 6) Strengthening governance, the rule of law, accountability and transparency including through the development of sound public financial management systems and, when appropriate, use of country systems; justice sector reform; implementation of the National Integrity Strategy and Right to information Act; and building public sector capacity in terms of administration and financial management. Improving domestic resource mobilization by improving tax collection and more importantly vastly widening the small tax net of the country.

Cutting across all the discussions was the importance of leaving no one behind in the pursuit of economic growth and development, including women & girls, the elderly, people with disabilities, socially excluded groups and youth.

The Government and DPs will digest and reflect on the BDF discussions in the coming weeks. The DPs will also work with the Government in the coming months to develop the second Joint Cooperation Strategy. The Joint Cooperation Strategy will lay out in more detail how the Government of Bangladesh and the Development Partners will work together, and with other partners such as civil society and the private sector, to support poverty reduction in Bangladesh and to foster a society where all people – both women and men – can achieve their full potential.

Annex-2

BDF 2015 Development Fair



Back-to-back with the Bangladesh Development Forum 2015, Government organized a “Development Fair” where public institutions, civil society organisations and development partners showcased some of their most exciting and innovative work in the country. The fair was inaugurated by the Hon’ble Prime Minister on the first day of the forum. Hundreds of visitors discovered the 41 stalls, presenting initiatives ranging from water management to climate adaptation and youth empowerment. At the closing of the BDF, the most outstanding stalls were rewarded with a prize in recognition of their interesting materials, appealing display and strong interaction with the visitors. The third prize was rewarded to the booth on “Education for All, All for Education” by the team of “Campaign for Popular Education” (CAMPE). The second prize was rewarded to the stall devoted to “Water, Sanitation and Water Resources Management” ran by a collective of development partners. Finally, the first prize was rewarded to the booth “Ensuring Energy for Sustainable Development of Bangladesh” by

Petrobangla of the Energy and Mineral Resources Division. The Hon'ble Finance Minister, Mr. Abul Maal A. Muhith, MP in person presented the three winners with their awards. All other participants were given a crest as a token of appreciation for helping to make the BDF a very animated event.

Annex-3

Press Briefing



BDF 2015 received wide coverage in the local and international news media. All the major newspapers and television channels of the country ran regular news stories on the event. ERD organized a pre-event media briefing on November 14 and a post-event media briefing on November 16 to sensitize the journalists about the BDF context and outcome. A number of TV Channels aired exclusive interviews of the Honorable Finance Minister on the eve of the BDF highlighting the expected outcomes of the event. Leading television channel Independent Television aired a talk show themed on BDF just a day before the event which was participated by the ERD Senior Secretary Mr. Mohammad Mejabhuddin as well as eminent representatives from civil society, development partners and academia. Apart from that, a good number of newspapers and television channels ran special stories on the forum. Leading English Daily -- 'The Financial Express' published a supplement on BDF 2015 on its 15th November 2015 issue. ERD also produced a short documentary on the development journey of Bangladesh on the eve of the forum which was screened during the inaugural session of the event. A range of communication materials including brochure, banners, festoons were also prepared on the occasion of the mega forum to create awareness among the relevant stakeholders. A few news clippings on the event published in different newspapers are attached herewith.