**PRESS RELEASE**

**European Union and Bangladesh hold 10th Joint Commission meeting**

On 20 May, the European Union (EU) and Bangladesh held the 10th Joint  
Commission in Brussels in a very constructive and open atmosphere, covering a wide range of issues of common interest.

The EU and Bangladesh discussed governance, democracy, rule of law and human rights, the Rohingya crisis, economic and trade cooperation, migration, climate change, education, development cooperation and regional cooperation. In this context, they looked forward to the first EU-Bangladesh Political Dialogue in Dhaka in June 2022.

The EU reiterated its appreciation for the continued generous role and action of the people and Government of Bangladesh for temporarily hosting more than a million Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMNs) / Rohingya for more than four years. Bangladesh thanked the EU for its political and humanitarian support to address this humanitarian catastrophe created by Myanmar. They both stressed the need for voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return of Rohingyas to Myanmar and the importance of continued delivery of essential assistance, support, and services. The EU raised the importance of providing perspectives to the largely young population of the forcibly displaced Rohingyas, especially in terms of health, education and livelihoods. Bangladesh welcomed the additional humanitarian aid announced on 20 May 2022 by the European Union to ensure life-saving support for hundreds of thousands of Rohingya and host communities in Bangladesh.

The EU commended Bangladesh for its continuing success as the largest beneficiary of the EU’s Everything But Arms (EBA) unilateral preferential trade arrangement. It was recalled that EBA preferences are conditional on the respect of human rights, including labour rights, as reflected in the international conventions listed in the GSP Regulation. Sustained reforms of labour rights standards by the Government of Bangladesh, and their full alignment with International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions are crucial in this regard. In this context, the EU welcomed the finalisation and publication of Bangladesh´s National Action Plan on the Labour Sector and stressed the need for its comprehensive implementation as per the stipulated timelines, for regular updates periodically on its implementation and for trying to advance the timelines of revising the labour law applicable in export-processing zones. Bangladesh reiterated the need for ensuring fair prices, especially in view of the investment being made in safer and greener factories. In view of Bangladesh’s graduation from least developed country (LDC) status, they agreed on the importance of establishing a predictable and sustainable business climate that will make it easier for trade and investment, removing market access barriers and promoting a sustainable diversification of its economy. To this end, the EU and Bangladesh remain committed to pursuing and further strengthening the Business Climate Dialogue.

The Joint Commission reviewed political developments on both sides and discussed the situation of democracy, the rule of law and good governance, including the importance of holding free and fair elections. Bangladesh and the EU exchanged views on respective approaches to the advancement of the rights of minorities, the rights of women and children and to engagement on human rights in multilateral fora. The EU welcomed the openness of Bangladesh regarding an international election observation mission for the next general elections. The EU stressed that a vibrant civil society is an important component of democracy, raised concerns on human rights in Bangladesh, in particular reports of alleged violation of human rights and emphasized the need to ensure accountability for such violations. The EU also raised concerns regarding the issues of civic space and freedom of expression offline and online, notably in the framework of the Digital Security Act (DSA), noting the importance for legislation and its implementation in this area not to go beyond the stated purpose of fighting digital crime and to be in line with international Human Rights obligations. The EU emphasised that promoting and protecting human rights of all, regardless of ethnicity, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, religious or political affiliation, disability or socio-economic background is crucial for stability, economic growth and development. The EU stands ready to provide increased cooperation in view of Bangladesh’s next Universal Periodic Review in 2023. The Bangladesh side stated that the Government is committed to guarantee human rights of all as enshrined in its constitution. The Government has a ‘zero tolerance policy’ against terrorism and violent extremism and highlighted the remarkable success of the security apparatus in this regard. The Bangladesh side also said that it values the nearly five-decade long partnership with the European Union and appreciates objective and constructive observations.

They took stock of the progress made in building their partnership and the EU’s continued support to Bangladesh’s development. Discussions focused on the EU’s Multiannual Indicative Programme (2021-2027), valued at €306 million for the period of 2021-2024, focused on the three priority areas of Human Capital Development, Green Inclusive Development and Inclusive Governance, which will be implemented in a Team Europe approach, with joint European initiatives in the areas of decent work and green recovery. The EU also underlined its interest to leverage investment with European partners and the private sector under Global Gateway through the European Fund for Sustainable Development plus (EFSD+) to maximise impact in line with Bangladesh’s ambitions, notably in renewable energy. In addition, both parties exchanged on policy reform progress, particularly in sectors supported by the EU such as education and skills development, public finance management, justice, social protection, renewable energy, and climate adaptation.

The EU and Bangladesh discussed a range of topics and priorities in the field of climate change adaptation and mitigation, with the EU reconfirming, inter alia, its interest to support renewable energy, notably regional hydropower generation, and energy connectivity. They underscored the importance of updated Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement and the need for mobilizing adequate funding for mitigation as well as adaptation. The EU and Bangladesh agreed to hold a climate dialogue in the course of 2022 and discuss a possible Green Partnership.

The Joint Commission discussed the progress on joint commitments in the context of the EU-Bangladesh Standard Operating Procedures for the Identification and Return of Persons without Authorization to Stay. The EU appreciated Bangladesh’s efforts to implement the Standard Operating Procedures and encouraged Bangladesh to achieve further concrete results on the return of Bangladeshi national not entitled to stay in the EU. The EU also informed Bangladesh of its inclusion in the recently adopted “Skills and Talent Package” and the upcoming launching of Talent Partnerships with specific partner countries, which will provide a new, more strategic and scaled up cooperation with partner countries on legal migration. Furthermore, the EU and Bangladesh discussed the political and security situation in the region, including maritime security, as well as counterterrorism and cooperation within the UN fora.

The Joint Commission was co-chaired by Ms Paola Pampaloni, Deputy Managing  
Director of the External Action Service of the European Union, and Ms Fatima Yasmin, Secretary, Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance,   
Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh.