

BANGLADESH DEVELOPMENT FORUM

15-16 NOVEMBER 2015

DHAKA

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.