

Workshop on LDC graduation and SDG achievement Nexus

Date: 21 May 2023, Venue, NEC2 Conference Room, ERD

Outcome Document (Draft)

A workshop on 'LDC graduation and SDG achievement Nexus' was organized by the Support to Sustainable Graduation Project (SSGP) of ERD on 21 May 2023 at the NEC2 Conference Room of ERD. ERD Secretary Ms. Sharifa Khan graced the occasion as chief guest. Additional Secretary and Wing Chief of the Development Effectiveness Wing of ERD Mr. Farid Aziz chaired the workshop. Detailed discussions and recommendations of the event are documented below:

Welcome Remarks from Chair: Mr. Farid Aziz, Additional Secretary and Wing Chief, Development Effectiveness Wing, ERD

Mr. Farid Aziz, in his welcome remarks, recalled that the workshop had been organized to create awareness among the ministries, divisions and agencies that have the lead & co-lead role to achieve the targets and are responsible for providing data for SDG17 related indicators. He observed that such stock taking and awareness building is necessary to keep the country on track in all SDG17 related indicators. Against this backdrop, he also underscored the need for concerted efforts of all concerned ministries or agencies. Afterwards, he asked the keynote speakers of the event to deliver their presentations.

Presentation on 'SDG -17 Progress and the Role of the Concerned' from Mr. Mohammad MasudRanaChowdhury, Joint Secretary, ERD:

In the beginning of his presentation, Mr. Mohammad MasudRana Chowdhury provided a broad overview of the 17 SDGs. He recalled that as per SDGs mapping, ERD along with MoFA, is the coordinator for 'Goal 17: Strengthening the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development'. He also mentioned that ERD is the lead for 12 targets as well as 12 indicators and also responsible for providing data for 23 different indicators. Afterwards, he presented a detailed matrix of SDG 17 indicators, baseline data, and milestone by 2025 for those indicators, 2030 targets as well as current status referring the 'Sustainable Development Goals: Bangladesh Progress Report-2022' published by General Economics Division of the Bangladesh Planning Commission. He pointed out that some of the indicators are on track while some other needs more attention. Finally he urged the concerned ministries, division and agencies to look after those points to achieve the required targets.

Presentation on 'The Role of Relevant Stakeholders in SDG Implementation: Bangladesh Context':

In the beginning of his presentation, Mr. Mohd. Monirul Islam recalled that the main tenets of SDGs resonate the speech delivered by the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the UN General Assembly on 25 September 1974. He also recalled that the SDGs also resonate the model of peace and peoples' empowerment presented by the hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the UN General Assembly in 2011. Afterwards, he highlighted the major steps taken by the government to implement SDGs in the context of Bangladesh. He also presented some major achievements of the government in line with various goals of SDGs. Mr. Islam informed that Bangladesh has made commendable progress in SDG implementation till now. It was also recalled that the hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had received 'SDG Progress Award' on 20 September

2021 for Bangladesh's notable success in achieving SDGs. He informed that the government is forming district-wise resource pools for implementation of SDGs comprising relevant stakeholders including retired government or private service holders, professionals, successful businessmen or entrepreneurs and prominent personalities. He also briefed that Government of Bangladesh has taken several steps for Localization of SDGs.

Presentation on LDC Graduation and its Complementarity with SDG Achievement

Mr. Rezaul Bashar Siddique, in the beginning of his presentation, explained the LDC graduation process in detail. He also explained the implication of LDC graduation and the difference between LDC graduation and attaining the Middle Income Country category. He also highlighted the International Support Measures (ISMs) that a country enjoys as an LDC. He also reflected on the overarching activities that a graduating country needs to carry out during the preparatory period.

Dr. Siddique, in his presentation, provided a detailed picture of the nexus between LDC graduation and SDGs. He pointed out that out of 169 targets of SDGs-- 18 explicitly refers to LDCs, out of which 12 are of prime importance. He also pointed out that there are a few common indicators between LDC graduation and SDGs. He observed that although LDC graduation does not signify complete progress toward implementing SDGs-- preparedness for smooth graduation would enhance SDG achievements. In this context, he opined that both LDC graduation and SDGs could complement each other and could help achieve the national goals.

Dr. Siddique, in his presentation, highlighted the complementarity between various SDG goals, indicators and various LDC graduation criteria. Highlighting on the focus areas of DPoA—he also presented the complementarity between those focus areas and SDGs. He also explained that how SDG1, SDG 2, SDG 7, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 10, SDG 13 and SDG 17 are interlinked, relevant and applicable for LDCs.

In conclusion, Mr. Siddique said that an innovative and improved policy approach and persuasion of a knowledge-based productivity-driven economy would help the LDCs like Bangladesh to graduate with momentum and implement SDGs by 2030. In this context, he observed that improved domestic policy choices and international support within a reinvigorated multilateral system are critical for achieving those targets. However, he put emphasis on better understanding of likely impacts of graduation with sufficient data and analysis, good preparation, and proactive engagement with development actors.

Open Floor Discussion:

At this stage, the floor was opened for comments and feedbacks participants. Subsequently, the following feedback came from them.

- It was queried that despite all the challenges associated with LDC graduation-- what sort of benefits Bangladesh would be able to enjoy after the uplift. Responding to this, Dr. Md. Rezaul Bashar Siddique said that LDC graduation would lead to better country image, better credit rating, increased FDI inflow etc. Noting that Bangladesh is yet to properly explore the benefits that would usher with LDC graduation—he called for carrying out a thorough exploration of such uncharted benefits.
- Participants also asked that what initiatives had been taken by the government for SDG localization. Responding to this, Mr. Mohd. Monirul Islam said that the government had already identified 39 SDG indicators that should be regarded as priority indicators for

Bangladesh. He also informed that apart from those 39 indicators, each and every upazilla and districts had been asked to identify an additional indicator (39+1) that should receive special attention in their own local context. Mr. Islam also informed that upazilla and district level SDG action plans were also being formulated as part of SDG localization. It was further informed that GED had piloted SDG localization model in 5 upazillas. It was also recalled that initiatives had been taken to localize SDGs implementation at the paurashava level.

- It was queried that what measures are being taken by the government to tap the demographic dividend currently enjoyed by Bangladesh. Responding to this, Mr. Mohd. Monirul Islam recalled that the 7th and 8th Five Year Plan of the government had already called for harnessing the demographic dividend. Noting that Bangladesh now has a growing percentage of aging population-- he also informed that the government had taken initiatives to voluntarily involve the retired officials from both public and private sector in various development schemes of their own localities.
- Participants also asked that what initiatives are being taken by the government to achieve Goal 16. Responding to this, Mr. Mohd. Monirul Islam said that the government's Five Year Plan had chalked out some specific measures that should be taken care of by the relevant government ministries, divisions and agencies to implement SDG 16.

Remarks from Chief Guest: Ms. Sharifa Khan, Secretary, ERD:

ERD Secretary, in her remarks, mentioned that Government of Bangladesh has taken 'Whole of Society Approach' to implement SDG in Bangladesh. In this context, she termed the workshop as quite timely and relevant. Underlining the government's increased emphasis on capacity building, she said that the withdrawal of various international support measures after LDC graduation would also create compulsion for such capacity building in various areas. Noting that Bangladesh would not be able to enjoy TRIPS related flexibilities after LDC graduation, she said that a relatively stringent IPR regime would also encourage innovation. She mentioned that a decision had been taken recently that the SDG focal point of each government ministries or agencies would also simultaneously act as the focal point for DPoA. Finally she thanked the participants of the different ministries, divisions and agencies for their active engagement in this workshop.

Concluding Remarks from Chair: Mr. Farid Aziz, Additional Secretary and Wing Chief, Development Effectiveness Wing, ERD

The Chair, in his concluding remarks, thanked all the participants for their active engagement and feedback. He also asked the officials from various ministries, divisions and agencies present in the workshop to regularly share the ERD related or SDG 17 related data with ERD. Lastly, he concluded the meeting by thanking all the participants.