



People's Republic of Bangladesh  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Segunbagicha, Dhaka

## Statement of the Hon'ble Foreign Minister at the United Nations Day ceremony, as Chief Guest.

Hotel Radison, Dhaka, 31 Oct 2009

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High Commissioners and Ambassadors,  
Ms. Renata Lok Dessallien,  
Excelencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here today to celebrate the United Nations Day. I, on behalf of the Government and the peoples of Bangladesh, convey our deep appreciation to the United Nations and the UN Secretary General for their efforts as an International Organization to maintain world peace and to pave the road to prosperity for all men.

The United Nations, as we know it, is the most universal multilateral forum in providing the Member States a platform where we can discuss a whole range of issues, from international peace and security to human rights to development. It is the only place where we set international norms and standards in dealing with these vital issues of mankind. Notwithstanding some inherent inequity, which reflects the global power balance in the post-Second World War period, the United Nations, and its organizations are the fora where a small country like Bangladesh can have an equal vote with a big and powerful country with an equal voice. Thus this is the most powerful forum to safeguard the interests of small and weak underdeveloped countries.

We all know that the perception about national security has developed over the

years focusing now much more on economic security, energy security, water resources security, food security as these have evolved as the most important elements of a national security regime of a sovereign and independent state. The United Nations, through the Member States, has been playing a pro-active role in these areas. From this perspective as well as from the viewpoint of collective strength of the UN as an embodiment of world opinion, the United Nations is also the greatest guarantee for national security for countries like Bangladesh. However, with many people still suffering from oppression under tyrannical regimes, lacking basic human rights and suffering from poverty, hunger and disease, we need global fora like United Nations where we can present our case for freedom, justice and human rights to the non-democracies of the world and secure return to sustainable democracy.

Dear Friends,

The role of United Nations in preserving and promoting cultural diversity can hardly be over-emphasized. In this context I would like to remember that it is also through the UN that our Bengali language and the sacrifice of the Bengali nation had received world recognition. Today, the International Mother Language Day is celebrated around the world paying respect to the memories of our language martyrs and also to reaffirm the singular role of mother tongue in promoting and protecting cultural and, indeed, national identity of a people.

Now-a-days the role of the United Nations has become even more significant in the context of the challenges faced by the contemporary world-from poverty and hunger to maternal and infant mortality to climate change to financial and economic crisis. It is now clear that no group of countries would ever be able to solve these myriad of problems unaided. This would need collective and concerted efforts on the part of all the nations. And there comes the United Nations as the most credible and acceptable organisation that the world could ever have. The speakers before me have rightly highlighted their expectations from the United Nations of today. I agree with them that the UN must take the lead now in tackling the challenges that the humanity is faced with-be it climate change, food security, global economic recession or attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

Excellencies,

It would, however, be naïve to believe that the UN can do everything or have been successful in all its missions. It can not. Though we have not witnessed a global catastrophe after the Second World War, but we have been pained by so many wars around the world, and also by so many internal armed conflicts in different parts of the world. It is even more regrettable that the most vulnerables-the poor

people, women and children-have become the worst victims of this madness. UN could not stop those, because we, the Member States, have failed to rise above paltry and sometimes wrongly perceived national interests. We urge the UN Secretary General to make optimum use of his good offices in halting the massacre and maiming of the helpless people, particularly women and children, in all parts of the world. Bangladesh would stand ready to do all it can.

And we have indeed been contributing to the UN process in a big way ever since we became its member in 1974. Even pending our membership in the UN, Bangladesh applied for and became members of other associated organisations such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Health Organisation (WHO), and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) by 1972. This eagerness to join the mainstream of the United Nations in fact reflected our unwavering commitment to the values of democracy, human rights, rule of law, equity and justice-the value system that United Nations stands for. These are also the ethos that we fought for through our Liberation War in 1971.

Dear friends,

Bangladesh's association with the United Nations, therefore, has only been natural. If I may recall here, the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in his speech at the UN General Assembly, first in that highest global forum on behalf of Bangladesh, made unequivocal commitment of the people of Bangladesh to democracy, good governance, human rights, and rule of law. Our current engagement with the United Nations draws inspiration from the vision of the Father of the Nations for a Bangladesh free from the curse of poverty, hunger, illiteracy and all other forms of deprivation, and of a peaceful world.

As all of you are aware, Bangladesh's role in the UN as a consensus-builder has been acclaimed over and over again. As a peace-loving country, Bangladesh has earned the respect of the international community as a credible player in international politics. Besides setting UN norms and standards on issues ranging from development to trade to human rights, Bangladesh has been a major contributor to UN efforts in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Excellencies,

It is over twenty years now that we have been a consistent and frontline contributor to the UN peacekeeping missions across the globe. At any given time, we have been contributing 10% to 12% of the total UN peacekeepers on the ground. So far, Bangladesh has participated in some 45 missions, where more

than eighty thousand peacekeepers from Bangladesh have made their lasting contribution to re-establish peace and rebuild the post-conflict societies. Right now we stand second in terms of total UN peacekeepers from Bangladesh, but rank first in terms of contribution by police personnel.

However, our contribution and effort did not stop at peacekeeping only. In many parts of the world we are engaged in peace building and its sustainability. This contribution to peace and security in different parts of the world has been acknowledged by the successive Secretaries General of the United Nations as well as by world leaders. Last month in New York, in a meeting between the US President and ten top peacekeeper providing countries, US President told our Hon'ble Prime Minister that Bangladesh's role in UN peacekeeping had not only brought prestige for Bangladesh but had also honoured the United Nations. This recognition of the role of Bangladesh, a small developing country, as a major contributor to the cause of international peace and security is not a mean feat.

Here I would like to remind you that this has not come without a price. So far, we have lost 98 heroic sons of the soil who laid down their lives in the service of international peace and security. Today, on the UN Day, I pay deep homage to their memories. Their supreme sacrifice has made our resolve even stronger to work with the global community in making this planet a better place for us and for our future generations.

Before I conclude I would like to quote from our Father of the Nation. He said that the world was divided into two groups, one was the oppressor and the other was the oppressed. He was with the oppressed. Likewise Bangladesh would always endeavour to strengthen the efforts of the United Nations working for the oppressed.

I thank you all.

Joy Bangla. Joy Bangabandhu.

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