

**Statement**

**by**

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**Hon'ble Foreign Minister of Bangladesh**

**On**

**at the United Nations Day**

**1500 hrs**

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**Carnival Hall, Bangabandhu International Conference Centre**

**Mr. Arthur Erken, UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh, Distinguished scholar Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.**

A good afternoon to you all. I am delighted to be here today to celebrate the United Nations Day and to reflect briefly on a topic close to my heart, 'MDGs Achievement and Bangladesh'.

But first, on behalf of the Government and the people of Bangladesh, may I convey our deep appreciation to the UN Country Team in Bangladesh for organizing this seminar befitting of a UN Day. We also take this opportunity to pay our tributes to the UN Secretary General HE Mr. Ban-ki Moon and his team for their untiring endeavours in maintaining world peace and paving the road to development and prosperity for humanity.

Let me congratulate the United Nations on its 65<sup>th</sup> founding anniversary. The UN, as we all know, was founded in the post-Second World War period by visionary world leaders to 'save successive generations from the scourge of war'. It was founded on the principle of equitable sovereignty of states; as an organization not to protect the interest of the powerful and the influential, but as a universal multilateral forum dedicated to the service of mankind and the peoples of the world through international cooperation.

The world has undergone profound changes since 1945. The **perception of national and global security** has undergone a sea change during the last six decades. On the one hand we see conflict situations whose progress towards resolution is slow or mired with intractability. Non-conventional threats such as international terrorism, ethnic strife, drugs, organized crimes, communicable disease etc. have overtaken conventional warfare. On the other hand, non-military threats including economic security, energy security, food and water security, climate security, poverty, the widening gap between the rich and the poor and among nations, the downsides of globalization, or even an occasional financial meltdown--all these have evolved as critical elements to national security of sovereign states. Ironically no one country can tackle these fearsome threats in isolation.

And in the face of all these formidable challenges, the United Nations still remains **mankind's best and indispensable hope** to live in peace and dignity, in freedom and in social progress. It remains the most universal multilateral forum as relevant as it were six decades ago, in harnessing the collective will and action of the international community in addressing the greatest challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Excellencies,**

How is the UN still the most relevant world body? The greatest strength of the UN is its **legitimacy** founded on the bedrock of international law, standards and conventions. The second compelling strength of the UN is its **universality and acceptability**. All 192 states of the world wish to be within the folds of the international community centering the UN. And the third flows from the first two- the UN's universal and legitimate mandate and capacity for the **collective management of world's political, economic and social problems** -be it international peace and security, be it democracy and human rights, international norm setting, countering terrorism or translational crime, climate change or refugees, or the menace of HIV/AIDS.

And yet there is an important but unannounced fourth strength, specially for countries such as Bangladesh- the principle of **equitable sovereignty**. In the UN, and in all its bodies, a small country like Bangladesh can have an equal vote and a voice in global decision making process at par with a big and powerful country. Thus the UN, designed as an embodiment of world opinion remains the most powerful forum to safeguard the interests of smaller countries, and is the **greatest guarantee** for their national security.

The experience in Namibia, Cambodia, East Timor, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic in Congo or Liberia, to name only a few, have vindicated **UN's legitimacy, role and relevance**. With six decades of experience in peacemaking, peacekeeping, and now peace-building, only the UN is the best placed to maintain global peace, while the Security Council remains the sole legitimate arbiter and authority on questions of use of force.

Apart from relentlessly promoting peace and security in troubled zones of the world and countering terrorism and transnational crime under international law, the UN during the past six decades, has been untiringly advancing its due mandate on **economic and social development**, strengthening democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, and alleviating the sufferings of the downtrodden and deprived with justice and development. The UN remains the greatest **champion** of serving humanity by reducing pandemic poverty and hunger, fighting deadly diseases and illiteracy, addressing the impending catastrophes of global climate change, promoting cultural diversity, and preserving cultural heritage and the global commons, mitigating the plight of the vulnerable groups in society and unfailingly, standing by millions of distressed people affected by natural or manmade humanitarian crises. It has brought hope and succour to every child and mother left behind, through its noblest gift to humanity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the **Millennium Development Goals**.

### **Excellencies,**

Bangladesh believes in a strong and effective United Nations. **Multilateralism** and an unwavering commitment to the principles enshrined in the UN Charter, is a central plank of our foreign policy deeply ingrained in our Constitution. Indeed, our struggle for nationhood and independence drew inspiration in large measure from the UN Charter and the UDHR. Our engagement with the United Nations is guided by the vision of our **Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman** who in his maiden speech at the UNGA on September 24 1974, made an unequivocal commitment for the people of Bangladesh to uphold peace, human rights, democracy, development, good governance, and the rule of law nationally and globally. He said and I quote, "The world is divided into two groups, one is the oppressor and the other is the oppressed. Bangladesh will always remain by the oppressed", unquote.

Guided by these noble values and ethos, Bangladesh, much before its membership in the UN on 17 September 1974 vindicated its eagerness to support the UN's efforts for 'uplifting the oppressed' by becoming a member of ILO, UNCTAD, WHO, UNESCO and other UN bodies. We see the UN as the source of inspiration, initiative and support in our national, regional and international endeavours. We thank the UN for devoting one of **its largest country development programmes** in Bangladesh. We remain dedicated to reciprocate this gesture as an active and contributing member of the world body in strengthening **its** efforts towards global peace, democracy, human rights, justice and development.

A small developing country, Bangladesh is proud to be a **major partner of the UN** in fulfilling its principal mandate- the maintenance of international peace and security. For more than two decades, Bangladesh has remained a dependable, consistent and frontline contributor to the UN peacekeeping missions including the most perilous ones, across four continents, by contributing **12 to 15% of the total UN peacekeepers** on the ground at any given time. More than 80,000 blue helmets from Bangladesh have in more than 45 missions, made their lasting contribution to re-establish peace and rebuild post-conflict societies. Currently the top troop and police contributing country, Bangladesh is specially proud to deploy 13 Formed Police Units including one all-Female Formed Unit to current peace Missions.

Bangladesh's high profile participation in UN peacekeeping is strongly guided by our "**peacekeeping diplomacy**" at the UN Security Council open debates and TCC consultations as well as at the UN Peace-building Mission, where we propagate our values for democracy, human rights and rule of law, and emulate our innovative models of social enterprise, non-formal primary education and women empowerment in post-conflict societies. Our lasting contribution to peace 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 humanity, and to whose supreme sacrifice and memories, I pay our deep homage to, on this UN Day.

### **Excellencies,**

Bangladesh today has earned the respect of the international community as a secular democracy and a peace loving country, and is well recognized and rewarded as a **credible player and a consensus-builder** in international politics through its vibrant diplomatic leadership at the UN. Bangladesh's diplomatic goodwill has earned itself current membership in 36 frontline UN bodies, **unprecedented in its diplomatic history**, including at the ECOSOC, Human Rights Council, Conference on Disarmament, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, WFP, FAO, UNFPA, CEDAW , ITU to name a few. In these we relentlessly strive to propagate our **core national values** including democracy, secularism, human rights, rule of law, women empowerment, rights of the migrant workers, a 'zero tolerance' towards terrorism and extremism, a general and complete disarmament and a '**culture of peace and non-violence**', Bangladesh's flagship resolution on fostering diversity, secular values and tolerance.

As previous speakers have stated, this UN Day taking place during the 65<sup>th</sup> UNGA is doubly special for Bangladesh which celebrates receipt of the international '**MDGs 2010 Award**' last month in New York. Our **Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina** while receiving the award and at the MDGs+10 High Level plenary, has made fresh pledges for Bangladesh that with no complacency whatsoever for already being on track on some key MDGs, her government would redouble its efforts to achieve all targets in MDGs-1 to 4 by 2021 latest, in unison with our 'Vision 2021' when we aspire to be a mid-income nation.

The recognition of '**the role of Bangladesh, a small developing country, as a major contributor to the key mandates of the UN is not a mean feat**', unquote, -was the commendation by HE Ban-ki Moon during his bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last month, where the Secretary General categorically praised and branded Bangladesh as a '**rising star**' in secularism and women empowerment and a '**UN role model**' in peace and development.

On this UN Day the Government and the people of Bangladesh are proud to **renew and reaffirm** our full trust and confidence in the UN as the only viable, universal and legitimate global body to address issues of international peace and security, of human rights and development. We are convinced that unilateral decisions and actions, by any country or group of countries, cannot meaningfully address the problems of international peace and security. This is especially valid if the security of small and economically disadvantaged states has to be ensured. For those who question the relevance of the world body, we invite them to recognize that the **UN cannot be expected to be successful in all its missions** because we, the Member States, have failed to rise above paltry national interests. The cardinal question, we believe, **is not what is wrong with the United Nations, but rather what is right with it**, and how we can make it best serve our purpose despite the evolving global flux and the distractions of the real world.

Let us on this auspicious 65<sup>th</sup> UN Day make a collective pledge to build a better United Nations, a more democratic and effective United Nations – one that reflects the world we live in today, and can meet the challenges we will face tomorrow. A United Nations that not only upholds world peace and security effectively, but also fosters the spirit of mutual respect and sovereign cooperation among nations for addressing the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century including poverty eradication, climate change, food security, terrorism, international migration or the attainment of the MDGs. I thank you all.

**Joy Bangla.**

**Joy Bangabandhu.**