

Climate Vulnerable Forum 2011—Inaugural Ceremony
Address by Sheikh Hasina, Hon'ble Prime Minister
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Dhaka, Monday, 30 Kartik 1418, 14 November 2011

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Hon'ble UN Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-Moon,
Former President of Costa Rica Mr. José María Figueres Olsen,
Hon'ble Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu Alaikum and Good Morning.

Let me welcome you to Dhaka for the Climate Vulnerable Forum 2011.

Climate change is a reality for the world. It has been causing large-scale loss of human lives and irreversible damage to environment, ecology and natural resources. Climate change caused over 300,000 additional deaths last year. Economic cost was over \$130 billion. Estimates may vary. However, vulnerabilities are increasing. Moreover, there is certainty on increase in impact significantly, if we do not take adequate and timely measure.

This Ministerial meeting in Dhaka affords us an opportunity to collectively think about our response, ahead of the Durban climate change meeting. The presence of an array of Ministers and high level delegations attest to increasing concerns of vulnerable countries. This also manifests their determination to seek an effective response to the ever-growing threat and to forge an effective partnership. I thank you Ministers and delegates for your kind presence.

Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-Moon deserves special mention for finding time to attend the Meeting and to express solidarity with our cause.

Since the Earth Summit in 1992, we have not been able to secure much progress in the reduction of green-house-gases. Their emission is still on the rise. This trend is unsustainable and damaging for the Earth. We, the vulnerable countries, suffer the most for our limited coping capacities.

Climate change is seriously impacting our livelihood and imposing huge costs to our development efforts. We are confronted with daunting adaptation challenges. Some of our countries even face existential threats. We are bearing the brunt of the damage though we made negligible or no contribution to the menace. This constitutes a serious injustice and must be acknowledged by the global community. This demand immediate rectification and remedy.

Excellencies, distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The global climate landscape has evolved considerably since the Forum first met in November 2009 in Malé. Progress under the UNFCCC process is very slow and inadequate. We do not see any concrete move to support nationally determined adaption initiatives undertaken by our vulnerable countries. Initial thoughts on modalities for the release of *fast start finance* do not inspire our confidence.

We see no evidence of direct and easy access to fund and technology. Conditions and criteria seem to favor countries that have greater capacities. We now have a situation where the most vulnerable countries, which deserve the highest level of priority, are failing to access whatever support that are being realized. We must therefore ask for a set of criteria to prioritize vulnerable countries based on their risks, impacts and lack of coping capacities.

Then, we see tendencies to confuse climate change support with development finance. Partners should provide us new and additional support, beyond development assistance to meet additional costs faced by us due to climate change. Funds being generated for the 2010-12 period are falling far short of commitments made in Cancun. Similarly, we see no clarity on how the global community would raise funds in the period between 2012 and 2020 towards operationalization of the Green Climate Fund.

On mitigation, we see extreme reluctance on part of major emitters. Absence of a convergence on obligatory and voluntary mitigation commitment is already casting shadow over the Kyoto Protocol. This may wreck the international climate regime and put our countries at the risk of peril. Hence, we should not hesitate to demand accountability for inaction. We should ask the industrialized nations to accept their historical responsibility and assume greater mitigation commitment. Similarly, emerging economies should also accept their moral responsibility and accept voluntary mitigation commitments based on equity and their own capacities.

It is widely accepted that the gravest effect of climate change may be on human migration. Last year, 42 million people were newly displaced by rapid-onset natural disasters. Extreme weather events are already displacing many more people than violent conflict. Slow-onset events like sea-level rise and desertification get even lower global focus. We must work towards correcting this imbalance. We must appreciate that migration could be an effective adaptation strategy, as we focus on enhancing adaptation capacities of affected communities. Hence, relocation and protection of displaced persons need due focus in global discourse to ensure their protection. We need to commence discussion on creation of an appropriate framework to address the needs of people displaced due to climate change.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Bangladesh and other vulnerable countries could not wait for international response to climate causes. We therefore adopted 'Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund Act' in 2010. We have so far allocated Tk. 21 billion (US\$ 280 million) from our own resources to the Fund. Some 62 Projects are being implemented utilizing the Fund to mitigate the adverse impact of climate change. We are implementing 134 climate change adaptation and mitigation action plans. We have finalized the 'Operation Manual' for utilizing US\$ 125 million as grant under Bangladesh Climate Change Resilient Fund. Cyclone shelters, extension of climate resistant agricultural system, greenery along the coastal belts are being developed utilizing the Fund.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Couple of weeks ahead of COP17 in Durban, we, the most vulnerable countries, should seize this opportunity to identify our collective concerns and articulate them. Primacy of adaptation over mitigation for our countries must be accepted. Given that many countries are shying away from their obligations, we, as the most sufferers, ought to take lead. Let us commit to internalize green development path, best suited to our own specific circumstances and without compromising on sustainable development and poverty reduction, our overriding priorities.

Let us convert challenges to opportunities of green development. Here, we expect our developed partners to come forward with technology and finance to enhance our coping capacity. We particularly need greater access to technology relevant to emergent adaptation challenges as well as to clean production processes and green energy. We hope our moral leadership would influence determined actions from capable countries to either take concrete actions or to support our endeavors.

In the face of climate change, we need to engage the global partners and forge an effective partnership. I am happy to learn that a wide range of countries and international entities are taking part as observers and supporting our cause. Our concerns must remain at the core of their policy planning and programming. Together, we can find the means for maximizing the potential of clean development towards domestic green growth and for optimizing co-benefits.

Dear participants,

Facing severe impact of climate change, the Forum should certainly focus on international policy dialogues and negotiations in particular under the UNFCCC process. But our focus should not remain confined to UNFCCC, as our challenges for survival and development transcends all sectors. It should serve the purpose for a focused public debate and consciousness building of the dangerous consequences of climate change for vulnerable communities and countries.

The CVF should aim to influence global decision making and to make global governance responsive to our imperatives and challenges. We should seek to articulate our demands in all global policy making platforms such as G-8, G-20, the Bretton Woods Institutions, and of course the United Nations and its Agencies.

I am confident that the UN systems under the able stewardship of Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon would mainstream the most vulnerable countries in the programs of its agencies and help us get a fair deal.

Excellencies,

I hope the CVF will contribute to forging an effective partnership and responsible decision making. We, the most vulnerable countries, must remain united and firm in the articulation of our legitimate demands so that the global actors pay due attention to our existential threats and rectify the injustice that we are faced with.

With these thoughts, I take this honour to inaugurate the CVF 2011 and wish it a grand success.

I thank you.

Khoda Hafez.
Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu.
May Bangladesh Live Forever.

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