

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH - COUNTRY STATEMENT
Presented at the Third Session of the Global Platform for Disaster
Risk Reduction, 8th – 13th May 2011, Geneva, Switzerland

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh, I wish to convey our sincere thanks to UNISDR for organizing this Third Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. I also wish to facilitate our Swiss hosts for the excellent arrangements made. The Platform provides an opportunity to showcase our efforts in enhancing resilience of our communities in the face of natural and manmade disasters, further aggravated by the impacts of climate change.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh's vulnerability to disasters and climate change is well documented. The options available to us are limited and often conflicting in terms of our needs and priorities. However, we have made sustained efforts to invest in disaster risk reduction and preparedness through mainstreaming them into our national development efforts, including in our poverty reduction strategies.

Bangladesh attaches importance to pro-active policy response to disaster management, and has over the time shifted its focus from relief to risk reduction and building resilience through comprehensive disaster management policies and programmes. This has resulted in dramatic reduction in the number of disaster-induced deaths and damages.

A salient feature of our disaster management policy is the promotion of sustainable livelihoods in disaster prone and affected areas. We have put in place a range of safety net programmes and food security measures to protect the most vulnerable, especially women, children and the elderly.

At the national level, we have twelve key ministries and departments coordinating their efforts under the Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme. This has helped ensure "disaster and climate change proofing" for sustainable investment in human and social development. A robust and regular system of parliamentary monitoring and oversight ensures the smooth functioning of the Programmes, among other issues. The active participation of our development partners and civil society organizations is an essential component of our disaster management approach.

The present government in Bangladesh has formulated a National Disaster Management Plan (2010-2015), the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP 2009) and the revised Standing Order on Disaster (SoD). The issue of framing a national Disaster Management Act remains under our active consideration.

Mr. Chairman,

In the rural areas, the participatory and bottom up Community Risk Assessment and Risk Reduction Action Plan has been deployed to harness local knowledge and resources to identify appropriate interventions by communities with support from the government. In view of growing urbanization in the country, an urban disaster risk reduction agenda is being pursued through hazards assessment, contingency planning, capacity building and training of community-based volunteers.

The government of Bangladesh has been investing in enhancing early warning capacities by facilitating smooth linkage between institutional forecasting mechanisms and community level dissemination. We rely on thousands of trained volunteers of the time-tested Cyclone Preparedness Programme to impart cyclone warnings. Knowledge and information are accessible through Disaster Management Information Centre (DMIC) and Network, connecting the national, district and sub-district centers.

Mr. Chairman,

The challenges facing Bangladesh from the emerging threats of climate change are complex and multi-dimensional. Bangladesh has already made significant steps forward in climate change adaptation. We are making efforts to mitigate the possible adverse impacts of climate change on people's lives and livelihoods through a combination of evidence-based research and use of technology and indigenous knowledge. Some of our notable homegrown adaptation measures include development of drought and saline resistant hybrid varieties of crops, homestead raising, building of multi-purpose cyclone shelters, dredging of major river systems, coastal afforestation and community based health interventions and disease prevention.

Still, there remains a lot to be done. We need to work towards making our 720 kilometer-long coastline disaster and climate-proof to protect around 35 million of our people living in these areas. We also need to invest in reconstructing our aging embankments and setting up an additional 6000 cyclone shelters. The growing challenge of urban risk reduction requires billions of dollars of investment. The emerging trend of disaster and climate induced displacements tends to undermine our hard-earned development gains. In order to address these multiple challenges, Bangladesh needs substantial, predictable and additional flow of financial resources and transfer of technology from the international community.

While we remain on the frontline of the impacts of climate change, we are also positioning ourselves as a role model in terms of our ability to translate our vulnerabilities into opportunities for sustainable development. Under the dynamic leadership of our Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, we remain committed to building a knowledge-based, middle income country in pursuit of our government's Vision 2021.

On the international front, Bangladesh has emerged as a leading voice in the ongoing climate change negotiations. Our mission is to project the voices of the least developed and the most vulnerable countries. Last year in Cancun, we played a pro-active role in establishing a climate change fund which is yet to be fully financed and materialized. We call upon all our development partners to redouble their commitment and support to help scale up of our disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation efforts.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

The Third Session of the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction creates an opportunity to review the progress made in implementing the Hyogo Framework of Action over the past years and chart a clear, effective, result oriented course for the future on the basis of the Global Assessment Report. Bangladesh reiterates its readiness to engage with Member States on global measures and actions to address disaster risks and climate change adaptation through a holistic approach. We need to address our systemic capacity constraints and implementation gaps through specific needs assessment under the remit of the Hyogo Framework of Action.

Mr. Chairman, we are confident that the international community will continue to strengthen this Platform by providing necessary guidance and impetus to meaningfully implement the Hyogo framework. Our committed and collective efforts can indeed turn our objective of minimizing disaster risk, whilst we aspire towards its elimination, across the world into sustainable and achievable realities.

Hon. Saber Hossain Chowdhury, MP

Chair, All Party Parliamentary Group on Climate Change & Environment, Bangladesh Parliament
& Head, National Delegation of Bangladesh