

STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF BANGLADESH DELEGATION
TO THE FIRST SESSION OF THE COP TO FCCC

Mr. President,

His Excellency Mr. , the of
Germany and distinguished delegates.

On behalf of the Bangladesh delegation, I have the pleasure to express my sincere gratitude to the people and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany for hosting the first COP of the Climate Change Convention in this beautiful city of Berlin. I am particularly delighted for the excellent arrangements made for the successful completion of the Convention.

Mr. President,

As you know, because of its geographical locations, Bangladesh is extremely vulnerable to natural calamities. The landmass is predominantly deltaic one and is criss-crossed by hundreds of rivers and canals big and small. Most of the major rivers originating in the Himalayan Range, discharge their water in the Bay of Bengal through Bangladesh. From geological point of view, this deltaic land is still in its active form, where accretion of land is still in progress with the heavy sediment load flushed in the Bay of Bengal.

The present population of the country stands approximately at 120 million with a population density of more than 750 persons per sq. km. About 80 percent of people are dependent on agriculture, which is still in its traditional form. Heavy dependence on agriculture alongwith low land-man ratio has severely strained the production in agriculture sector. The situation gets aggravated with floods, cyclones, droughts, tidal surges and other vagaries of nature.

Mr. President,

The people of Bangladesh have reasons to be concerned about the potential impacts of climate change. As is being predicted, should there be Sea Level Rise as a result of Global warming, by upto one metre, 12 to 17 percent of our total land mass will be submerged and about 20 million people would become ecological refugees. Among the other predicted consequences of Global warming which Bangladesh may have to encounter, are a rise in the frequency and intensity of tropical cyclones, increase in flooding severity, and more areas under saline intrusion. Cumulative result of all these would have further devastating effects on the people and property of the land, particularly those in the coastal region. Lastly, creeping desertification covering large areas in the northern part of the country is also another adverse impact of climate change that cause grave concern.

Distinguished delegates,

The likely climate change impacts prompted Bangladesh to express its concern on the issue and associated itself with the INC process for a Convention on climate change and ratified the convention on 16 February 1994. Bangladesh hopes that the Global community will attach due importance to address all climate change issues in right perspective with all earnestness. Bangladesh firmly believes that in the greater interest of human kind, the challenges of climate change are to be faced concertedly irrespective of one's contribution to global warming. However, the Framework Convention on Climate Change [FCCC] that we have all signed clearly defines the responsibility of the anthropogenic interventions on climate change.

Mr. President,

Bangladesh, being a Least Developed Country, contributes very little to GHG generation due to anthropogenic interventions; but we will have to pay the greatest price for this climate change. With its limited resources and very little external assistance, Bangladesh has so far undertaken a number of studies on climate change. These studies are primarily based on secondary data. From the studies, it appears that Sea Level Rise and other climate change factors will have severe impacts on Bangladesh, on its population, economy, infrastructure, agriculture, industry, fishery, human settlement, fresh water resources and the eco-systems at large.

Mr. President,

With the assistance of some of our partners in development, Bangladesh has carried out a Vulnerability Assessment and has initiated a study following IPCC methodology to inventorize the GHG emissions, assessment of vulnerability and adaptation and mitigation measures. The study is in progress. This study would open the way for detailed studies on sectoral and cross-sectoral issues to reduce GHGs. Apart from this, a number of other studies on climate related issues are also being conducted at our universities and by some of the NGOs, who are active in environmental studies. Bangladesh has already prepared and is implementing a Phase Out Plan for the CFSc. We are taking our responsibility in terms of global climate change with seriousness that it deserves.

Mr. President,

The concept of environment is new in our country. Institutionally, we are yet to be organised fully to handle myriad environmental issues including climate change. Recognising the need

for building up institutions in this sector, the government has since created the Department of Environment and established a separate Ministry of Environment in 1989. To oversee and direct various activities in the field of environment, a National Environment Committee headed by the Hon'ble Prime Minister has been constituted. This Committee is assisted by an Executive Committee headed by the Minister for Environment and Forest. There also exists a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Environment and Forest to advise the government on environmental issues. Apart from all these, there are other agencies, particularly some NGOs, who ~~can~~^{are} directly or indirectly involved in environmental matters including climate change. It may not be out of place to mention that an Advisory Committee participated by eminent scientists in the field of climate change has been formed which is presently associated with the developments of on-going Climate Change Country Study. The government has also constituted an Inter-Ministerial Committee to oversee climate change related issues. Capacity building in this particular area is required to be vigorously pursued in spite of our resource limitations.

Mr. President,

We have very recently enacted a Framework Legislation on environment and are now in the process of framing various rules and regulations as may be required to deal with emerging environmental issues including climate change.

Mr. President and distinguished delegates,

The responsibility of the world community in translating the objectives of this Convention into actions cannot simply be over emphasized. The cardinal point in this regard would be to ensure adequate new and additional funds and timely flow of resources to Developing Country Parties attaching priority to the needs and special situations of the LDCs. In view of global warming and

concomitant Sea Level Rise, a number of densely populated countries like Bangladesh with low-lying coastal areas are likely to suffer most and may have to put enormous effort to rehabilitate the ecological refugees. In such cases, the sparsely populated developed countries may have to review their immigration policies.

Mr. President,

On my personal behalf and on behalf of the Bangladesh delegation, I express my sincere appreciation for allowing me to say a few words on some of the issues that concern us most. We express our solemn pledge to the world community to march forward in solving the climate change issues in saving this habitable planet earth.

Thank you all very much.