

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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SPEECH AT DHAKA UNIVERSITY
Dhaka, Bangladesh 15 November 2011

Assalamu Alaikum.

What a pleasure and honour to be back in this distinguished and esteemed university of Dhaka.

I am so fond of this beautiful country that I can say only one thing:

Amar Shonar Bangla Ami Tomai valobashi [My Bengal of gold, I love you].

And I am deeply honored to be given this doctorate degree here at Dhaka University.

The world is well-aware of your long tradition of scholarship and achievement.

And it was here, of course, that the flag of an independent Bangladesh was raised for the first time. Today, your university flies the standard of a new national pride, the pride of many difficulties overcome, the pride of a promising future.

In conferring this honorary degree upon me, you are voicing your belief in the United Nations, here in Bangladesh and throughout the world.

On behalf of our noble United Nations organization, I thank you humbly and with a full heart for your support and this great honor.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I want to talk with you today about where our world is going, where the United Nations is headed, and how the dynamic people of Bangladesh fit into that picture.

Let me begin with a personal recollection.

I have visited Dhaka several times, most recently three years ago as United Nations Secretary-General.

I always come away with fond memories, but one visit was especially vivid.

During so many visits to Dhaka during the 1970s, the early years of Bangladeshi nationhood, I was a young foreign-service officer of the Republic of Korea covering Bangladesh because at that time, Korea didn't have an embassy here. I was stationed in New Delhi.

Whenever I visited Dhaka, I would take a rickshaw in from the airport.

In those days, there was a lot less traffic!

I felt at home here. My own home country, Korea, and Bangladesh had a great deal in common. Each of us could boast of an ancient culture. We were poor. We both had suffered greatly from the wars.

But even then, I could clearly see that we also shared a work ethic and a will to succeed.

So it was a particular privilege, on that occasion, to participate in a very historic ceremony of signing the agreement establishing the diplomatic relationship between the Republic of Korea and the People's Republic of Bangladesh in 1973.

In fact, the Korean ambassador used my fountain pen to sign the accord.

I still keep that historic pen in a place of honor at my home in Seoul.

More important, I keep the experience, alive in my heart and head.

Here in Dhaka, so long ago, I took a big step along the path that brings me back once again to you.

The only difference is that, today, I feel the same way about 193 Member States of the United Nations - not only Bangladesh, but my heart is still with Bangladesh.

At the opening of the General Assembly in September this year, I set forth an agenda for my second term as Secretary-General - five imperatives for the next five year, five generational opportunities to shape the world of tomorrow through the decisions we make today.

Bangladesh is well-placed to contribute to this ambitious agenda.

You are already a leader on what must be the world's Number One priority for the 21st century: sustainable development.

We need to do more for the poor.

We need to create jobs, offer better health care, provide clean water, affordable energy and stable food prices for the world's people

And we need to do more for this planet. We have only one planet. Don't [make a] mistake - we have only one planet. We don't have two or three planets. We have to preserve this planet so that our future generations can live in a more hospitable and environmentally sustainable atmosphere.

That is what I told the G20 leaders.

During times of economic uncertainty, I said that we cannot forget the poor and vulnerable. I urged them to write a new social contract. I was, in short, speaking for you.

This morning I visited a clinic in Moulavibazaar. I met with farmers in Bouddashashan. I

saw some of the important work Bangladesh is doing to reach the Millennium Development Goals.

Indeed, you are one of only 16 priority countries on track to meet the MDG targets for saving the lives of mothers and children.

In your primary and secondary schools, there are as many bright young girls as boys.

Your pioneering work with microcredit has transformed the lives of the poor worldwide.

Your NGO, BRAC, has won the UN's Mahbub ul-Haq award. Yesterday Prime Minister [Sheikh] Hasina and I inaugurated a One Stop Service Center - Digital Bangladesh is becoming a reality.

Such achievements should be models for the world.

I urge Bangladesh to bring them to next year's UN conference on sustainable development - Rio +20 summit meeting.

I hope you will give our global "Every Woman, Every Child" initiative your utmost support and make our "Sustainable Energy for All" initiative a reality.

Ladies and gentlemen,

My second priority is building a safer and more secure world.

Here, too, Bangladesh is a leader.

You are the world's top contributor to UN peacekeeping. One of every ten peacekeepers around the world is Bangladeshi.

During the past year, you helped defend democracy in Côte d'Ivoire. You helped give birth to the world's new nation, South Sudan.

You are there - in Lebanon, Timor-Leste, Western Sahara.

At a time when the UN must struggle to find enough peacekeepers to fulfill its mission, you are just showing indispensable leadership and global citizenship.

Yesterday I had the pleasure of meeting some of your soldiers and police at the Institute of Peace Support, BIPSOT.

Right after this ceremony, I am going to meet with the families of those who died in UN service. And I see widows and family members whose beloved sons and daughters perished in the cause of their mission.

Some are here this afternoon. Let us acknowledge their loss, let us thank them for their sacrifice in the name of peace and in the name of humanity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Peacekeeping is vital. Yet we all agree: it would be far better if we prevent those conflicts from erupting in the first place.

Indeed, prevention is our third great opportunity.

And let us take a broad view. What is true for preventing manmade threats, such as armed conflict or nuclear accidents, is also true for natural disasters.

Consider two cyclones in Bangladesh, 16 years apart.

The first, in 1991, killed 140,000 people. The second, just over 4,000. Even 4,000, maybe you may say, that's a large number of people. But consider the difference between 140,000 and 4,000.

What made the difference: a huge national investment in disaster risk reduction.

Your country's vulnerability to climate change makes prevention especially urgent.

I commend Bangladesh for organizing yesterday's Climate Vulnerable Forum. You are showing not only resilience but foresight.

You are taking your know-how in disaster risk reduction and applying it to climate change adaptation.

Please be assured: in all this, the United Nations will continue to be your partner.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There will be no sustainable development without the world's women and young people. Empowering them - women and young people - is our fourth great imperative.

Here, too, Bangladesh is a leader.

We have only to point to your head of government, the Prime Minister, and the leader of the political opposition, both women of strength and commitment.

Closer to the ground, we can point to the Bangladeshi women police who are making a name for themselves in Haiti, or my own Special Representative heading the UN's work in Timor-Leste, Ameerah Haq.

Like many nations, Bangladesh struggles with issues involving the exploitation and abuse of women and girls. Too often, these crimes go unpunished.

I urge all of you to join in the fight against these violations of human rights.

Bangladesh also faces a so-called "youth bulge" - the large and growing proportion of the population under the age of 24.

In many places, young people have taken to the streets in protest, demanding more voice in

decisions that affect their daily lives and calling for more social and economic opportunities. We must listen to them.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

That leads me to my fifth and final imperative - helping countries in transition.

The upheavals sweeping North Africa and the Middle East have dominated news headlines.

But Bangladesh, too, is also a nation in democratic transition. You have made great strides.

The elections of 2008 were conducted peacefully.

The United Nations is proud to have helped create a digitized voter list, an important step toward transparency.

It is essential that future ballots be carried out in a manner that is free, fair, credible and democratic and fully transparent.

You are also seeking to deal more fully with the legacy of 1971. You have established a War Crimes Tribunal and taken other important steps.

These issues are difficult, to be sure. Yet for any nation, dealing with the darker aspects of the past is essential to creating unity and building a healthy and brighter future.

You also face the challenge of ensuring that parliament can function as it is meant to do in a democratic society.

I urge the government and the opposition to do more to make this possible.

I also urge you to advance on the vision of a fully inclusive society that Prime Minister Hasina described in her speech to the United Nations General Assembly last September, a tolerant society in which all people have a place.

That includes ethnic minorities such as the people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. And it includes assisting those facing humanitarian emergencies who have sought safety in Bangladesh, such as the Rohingya refugees.

In addressing these issues, you will succeed in building a society true to the spirit of 1971 and the progressive values of the Bengali people.

Along the way, you will do more than heal social tensions at home. You will set an example for other societies, undergoing challenging transitions of their own.

Mr. President,
Distinguished faculty,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Three years ago, on my first visit, I paid tribute at the tomb of your national hero,

Kazi Nazrul Islam.

His life and work ended decades ago, but his words endure.

“Should a single person be hurt,” he wrote, “all hearts should feel it equally.”

“If one person is insulted; it is an insult to all.” This is a message of solidarity and tolerance ... a call for mutual understanding and common action.

What kind of nation are we building, these words ask us. What kind of world?

If Bangladesh is to create the prosperous future that it deserves, it will do so only through national unity and common cause.

So, too, for the United Nations.

If we as a global people are to create a just and prosperous future for all, we will do so only by working together on the great challenges before us.

Ultimately, partnership drives progress.

And I can think of no better partners for the United Nations than the dynamic and pioneering people of Bangladesh. Let me also say this, directly to the young people with us today: a special burden lies upon you.

Whatever your chosen path, whatever your profession, be bold.

Think big. Above all, think of yourself as part of the wider world.

Be global citizens. Believe, believe in your ability to make a difference, at home and everywhere.

As for me, I leave here confident in the prospects for your continued success.

And I very much look forward to my next visit. As another famous Bangla poet said: *Abar ashibo firey, ei banglay* [I will return to this Bengal].

Thank you very much for this honour.

Dhonyobad. [Thank you]