

**The Secretary-General**

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**Remarks at working luncheon with H.E. Mr. Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, Finance
Minister of Bangladesh
Dhaka, Bangladesh
15 November 2011**

Excellency,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for this warm welcome. It is a pleasure to be here.

Let me begin by congratulating you on Bangladesh's remarkable resilience. As the rest of the world struggles with the economic crisis, you keep growing.

I am sure that many finance ministers would like to know your secret!

If I had to guess, I would say it is because you are investing in your people. As we see it at the UN, that is the secret of sustainable development.

In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that Bangladesh has become a model for the world.

That is why I have come to Bangladesh. Not only are you on the front-lines of development challenges. You are on the front lines of development solutions.

Over a few short decades, you have risen from hardship to build a thriving economy.

By 2020, you expect to graduate from the ranks of the least developed countries to join those of middle income.

Along the way, you have made great progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

You are in the vanguard in lifting people from poverty.

More and more children are attending school -- boys and girls like.

You are improving public services, including sanitation and fresh water.

I am particularly impressed by your country's pioneering achievements in women's and children's health, and I am happy to have been able to see some of these projects for myself.

During my field visits yesterday and today, I saw that you are working hard to ensure that the poorest and most vulnerable are not left behind.

As Minister of Finance, you have been instrumental in scaling up these sorts of social

investments. I encourage you to be even more ambitious in the future. It is very important to keep up your momentum — particularly during this time of global economic troubles.

I am also glad to note that you will be attending tonight's "Every Woman Every Child" dinner. I hope the dinner will be another step in mobilizing public and private support for this very innovative initiative.

Your Excellency,

Like other nations, Bangladesh continues to face serious challenges.

Population growth ... rising inequality ... rising food and energy prices ... the need to create decent jobs for young people – all these will test your ministry and the country in general.

And of course, economic troubles elsewhere have repercussions here.

At the G-20 summit in Cannes earlier this month, I urged world leaders to take the long view — to look beyond national borders and interests. We must forge a common agenda that can achieve sustainable, equitable growth and protect all people from economic and financial shocks.

I emphasized that, especially in times of austerity, we cannot afford to leave the world's poorest and most vulnerable behind. In this, I spoke for you.

Now is the moment to look toward next year's very important Rio+20 conference on sustainable development.

In Cannes, I successfully proposed that the next G20 meeting be advanced so as to be closer to the start of this Rio conference. That way, we can expect a large number of heads of state and government to attend. This is essential if Rio is to be a success.

As I see it, the key will be to find solutions that connect the dots. Climate change, food crises, water scarcity, energy shortages, global health issues, job creation, women's empowerment — these problems are all inter-related.

If we are smart ... if we think fresh ... we can find solutions to each problem that are solutions to all.

Connecting the dots also means working across ministries. The support of finance leaders such as you and your counterparts can help us make the most of Rio + 20.

Finally, let me highlight three steps that will be especially important for Bangladesh.

First, Bangladesh will need to make the best possible use of the assistance the country receives. Some OECD countries may restrict bilateral aid. You will have to make each dollar go further. We are doing the same at the UN itself.

Second, we need to focus on the poorest and most vulnerable. Bangladesh has many success stories involving social protection, microcredit, cash for girls' education and other strategies. We want to help you tell these stories, so that they may inspire others to find similar

solutions.

Third and perhaps most important, Bangladesh must continue to build its democracy.

Excellency,

I understand that, recently, global investors have begun to feature Bangladesh on their lists of emerging economies.

They see Bangladesh among the next wave of middle-income countries. You might say they see the Bengal tiger poised to leap. And indeed, that is your goal.

Let us work together to help this Bangladeshi tiger leap, powerfully and far — for the benefit of all your country's people.

I look forward to your views on how best we can help.

Thank you.