



**Speech by Mr. Neal Walker
UN Resident Coordinator**

UNDAF Signing Ceremony

1 June 2011

Honorable Finance Minister, Mr. Muhith;
Secretary, ERD, Mr. Bhuiyan;
Joint Secretary, ERD, Mr. Das;
Dear UN Colleagues;
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honor and a real pleasure to be here today on behalf of the United Nations System in Bangladesh for the signing of the UN Development Assistance Framework -- UNDAF, covering the period of 2012-2016. Today's signing ceremony is an important step in the UNDAF process. During the next months, we'll be carrying out, in close collaboration with our government partners, some additional planning and development work that is designed to ensure maximum impact from all UN grant assistance. I would like to highlight that this UNDAF was built on rigorous analysis and that it is based on a comprehensive assessment of progress towards the MDGs that was carried out jointly between the Government and the UN system in Bangladesh. It is also based on the clear priorities defined in the emerging 6th Five Year Plan and Vision 2021.

THE JOY OF TODAY'S CEREMONY IS THAT NOW, WE CAN GET TO WORK ON THE REAL CHALLENGES THAT FACE THE COUNTRY! The actual implementation of the programmes will begin from 2012, taking into account the clearly defined government priorities and the respective mandates of the different Agencies, Funds and Programmes of the United Nations. It will be our collective pride to show results, together with our counterparts, for the people of Bangladesh. We expect to bring additional grant aid to the priorities of the country, through the implementation of the UNDAF. Specifically, the new UNDAF represents the commitment and investment of the entire UN System in Bangladesh over the next five years and is projected to be worth at least 1.8 Billion US Dollars.

The overarching goal of the new UNDAF is to assist Government to meet the commitments it has made in its national plans, and that it has made in front of the United Nations General Assembly. A clear example is the commitment made by the Honorable Prime Minister Sheik Hasina to the Millennium Declaration, back in the year 2,000 and the more specific commitments by the Government of Bangladesh in the same meeting of the UN General Assembly, to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (the "MDGs").

Equity in the achievement of the MDGs must be at the heart of a social justice approach and it is exactly this approach that the Government has defined for the country. I believe that all of us here today can understand that Social Justice and Equity are crucial, driving concepts to achieve real human development in Bangladesh. These very same concepts also underlie the mandate of all UN agencies, funds and programmes and, along with a human rights based approach, underpin the new UNDAF.

And another important aspect of the UNDAF that we are signing today is that it offers, for the first time in Bangladesh, an opportunity for the UN System to work together, in a coherent and results oriented way, on behalf of the most vulnerable communities. I hereby pledge to the government and to the citizens of Bangladesh, the UN system will be working strategically and systematically, and we will be driven by results. Please allow me to provide, very briefly, a few selected examples of the results anticipated by the new UNDAF in the seven thematic pillars:

- ***UNDAF Pillar 1: Democratic Governance and Human Rights*** will help the Government of Bangladesh to continue the success that it has had in conducting fair and credible elections. It provides concrete assistance to strengthen the capacity of the Election Commission. It also focuses on equitable access to justice for all through the strengthening of local justice mechanisms.
- ***UNDAF Pillar 2: Pro-poor Economic Growth with Equity*** is centered on the economic empowerment of the urban and rural poor. It will help create economic opportunities and decent employment opportunities. It also builds on efforts to protect the impoverished and vulnerable from external economic/market shocks.
- ***Pillar 3: Social Services for Human Development*** supports strategies to ensure that those who are most deprived, including women and children, benefit, in a quantifiable and evidenced way, from quality health, population, sanitation, water and education services.
- ***Pillar 4: Food Security and Nutrition*** focuses on ensuring that poor communities benefit from adequate food and nutrition. Support is provided in a comprehensive way: strengthening institutional mechanisms related to food and nutrition and in the provision of direct inputs to nutritional health.
- ***Pillar 5: Climate Change, Environment, Disaster Risk Reduction and Response*** will help Government at all levels to protect vulnerable populations from natural disasters such as cyclones and floods and help them prepare for the effects of climate change through adaptive strategies. It also focuses on securing benefits to communities based on the efficient management of natural resources. The UN hopes to highlight the

innovative practices developed in Bangladesh to address the global challenge of climate change and disaster management.

- ***Pillar 6: Pro-poor Urban Development*** builds on ongoing efforts to improve the living conditions of the urban poor through secure tenure and affordable housing, decent employment and access to social services.
- ***Pillar 7: Gender Equality and Women's Advancement*** addresses gender disparities and seeks to improve conditions for disadvantaged women and girls who continue to suffer disproportionately. We anticipate results in their improved access to education, employment. The UN will also help national partners in the definition and implementation of national policies that would support the empowerment of women.

So, those are the results that we can already anticipate. As I mentioned, there are still a number of key UNDAF activities to carry out this year before implementation begins in 2012. As you may know, ERD has requested the UN Country Team to consider the possibility of preparing a single, consolidated UNDAF Action Plan, replacing the need for four separate Country Programme Action Plans (CPAPs) normally prepared by UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and WFP. In response to this request, the UN Country Team is planning a half-day retreat shortly to look into the feasibility of an UNDAF Action Plan, including the steps required.

I would also like to offer to the government my personal support in preparing some ideas and recommendations on how the government project approval process through the TPPs/DPPs might be simplified. This would help the Government to access and accelerate spending of the nearly US\$12 Billion in donor funding which remains unspent. The UN system would be an obvious point of entry for streamlined approval processes: We are a trusted partner, working on achievement of government defined priorities and we work directly with government systems. Finally, the UN has excellent capacity to implement results-oriented programmes. There is real urgency to achieve results, and it is my view that the strong Government -- UN partnership can really make it happen.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank ERD, Ministry of Finance, both personally, and on behalf of the whole UNCT, for their valuable support and for facilitating the Government of Bangladesh's full participation in the UNDAF process. We look forward to the continued fruitful collaboration.