

Bringing Positive Change to Those We Serve

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Honorable prime minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, His Excellency Samdech Hun Sen, honorable heads of state, honorable heads of government, excellencies, honorable speakers, parliamentarians, friends, distinguished delegates, media representatives, *shuprôbhat*, a very good morning to you.

It is a distinct honor and very special pleasure for me to join Asia Pacific Summit 2019 in the Peace Palace of Phenom Penh the capital city of Cambodia, home to the ancient Angkor civilization. I express my sincere gratitude to the honorable prime minister of the Royal Kingdom of Cambodia, His Excellency Hun Sen, the modern architect of Cambodia for inviting me to this very important event. I also congratulate Universal Peace Federation and Mother Moon for her leadership in organizing this summit along with ICAPP [International Conference of Asian Political Parties, founded by Jose De Venecia] IAPP and ACC. I am deeply touched by the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to me in this beautiful, historic city of Phenom Penh.

Chaos throughout the world

Distinguished delegates, leaders from the Asia Pacific [region] who have gathered here to address the critical challenges of our time -- peace, reconciliation, interdependence, mutual prosperity and universal values, which are all interlinked. Political stability is essential for lasting peace and without peace there can be no development. We live in a time of globalization. We live in an inter-connected and interdependent world. The rapid progress of technology moving us toward Industry 4.2 [a development of what some people call the fourth industrial (Internet-based) revolution or Industry 4.0] poses new challenges. The world now is experiencing popular uprisings, internecine conflicts, food and energy insecurity, terrorism, climate change leading to a planetary emergency, refugee and migration issues, forcible displacement of people, like the Rohingya people now in Bangladesh and human trafficking -- all transcending national boundaries -- that confront us with a whole range of emerging global challenges. Democracy, in order to be sustainable, must deliver and address the critical issues of poverty eradication, inequality, the crisis of safe drinking water, unemployment, etcetera, that affect the lives of our people in a fundamental way.

Our nation's father figure

Economic growth must be inclusive as it is about shared prosperity. Women must be at the center of all development. We must acknowledge that peace is not just the absence of war or conflict as stated by Albert Einstein. "Peace is a daily, a weekly, a monthly process, gradually changing opinions, slowly eroding old barriers, quietly building new structures," as stated by President Kennedy [September 20, 1963 UN General Assembly, New York]. Our father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, believed in the peaceful settlement of disputes. He believed in contributing to global peace and security by following the principle of friendship toward all and malice toward none, which is the foundation, the basis of trust in our foreign policy in Bangladesh.

Our honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina "Mother of Humanity" [and daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman] presented a peace-centric development model encompassing six aspects -- eradication of poverty and hunger, reducing inequality, mitigation of depravation, elimination of terrorism, the right of all people to take part in the development process, providing quality education and skill development and gainful employment. This people-centric peace model is based on the concept of the empowerment of

people. The UN General Assembly adopted this in its seventy-second UN General Assembly.

Helping those in need

Bangladesh has demonstrated its staunch commitment to peace as a top contributor to UN peacekeeping and also as a member of the UN Peace-building Commission. Our honorable prime minister Sheikh Hasina settled a twenty-year-long conflict at home through the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord in 1997.

Bangladesh believes in the peaceful settlement of issues with its neighboring countries and at the regional level, based on negotiation, principles of interdependence for mutual prosperity and the welfare of the people. Bangladesh also believes in zero tolerance toward terrorism. Bangladesh thus seeks and appeals for support from ASEAN and other regional countries and also from the international community to find a peaceful solution to the Rohingya issue so that safe and voluntary repatriation of the Rohingyas to Myanmar can be effectuated without further delay.

Bangladesh under the visionary leadership of our honorable Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, has emerged as a development miracle in the world with reduction of poverty from 40 percent to 21 percent in the last decade, gender equality and women empowerment, food security, consistent GDP growth of about 8 percent, enhancement of life expectancy, reduction of maternal and infant mortality, 95 percent electricity coverage throughout the country, more than five thousand Union Digital Centers [digitally-equipped government offices in rural and semi-rural areas where the poor can apply for and receive assistance] in operating, rapid digitalization, and a hundred special economic zones for foreign investment demonstrate that the country is on the highway of development to be a middle-income country by 2021, a developing country by 2024 and a developed country by 2041.

Compassionate government

Distinguished delegates, we parliamentarians, politicians, political leaders, leaders of civil society are entrusted with the duty to bring about positive changes in the lives of the people we serve. We must therefore strive to create a world where everyone has equal opportunity to obtain their potential and aspirations. We must put in efforts to thwart terrorism, to counter climate change's negative impacts and provide citizens a life with safety and dignity. Dear delegates, I'm confident that this summit will chart the way forward for greater integration in the Asia Pacific region for achieving common goals and ensuring mutual prosperity through dialog, cooperation, partnership and engagement in building mutual trust and strengthening friendship. Let us work together by nurturing the intrinsic values of equality, rule of law, human rights, fundamental freedom and justice, respect for diversity, tolerance and pluralism, and thereby build a sustainable, equitable and peaceful world.

Let me conclude with a quotation from our father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the UN General Assembly in 1973, "Let us together create a world that can eradicate poverty, hunger, war and human sufferings and achieve global peace and security for the well-being of humanity." Thank you all for your kind attention. May Bangladesh live forever. May Bangladesh and Cambodia's friendship live forever.

Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury earned two law degrees from the University of Dhaka and a PhD in Constitutional Law and Human Rights from the University of Essex in the UK. She later received an honorary doctorate from the University of Essex. She was elected as a Bangladeshi MP in 2009 and was State Minister for Women and Children's Affairs until her nomination as Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad from 2013 to this day. She was the both the youngest ever Speaker and the first ever woman Speaker in Bangladesh.