



Speech by

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&
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Statement by Dr. Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, Representative of Bangladesh to the UNESCO Executive Board & Principal Secretary to the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh at the Plenary Debate of the 202nd Session of the UNESCO Executive Board, Paris, 09 October 2017

Mr. Chairperson,
President of the General Conference,
Madam Director General,
Distinguished Representatives and Delegates,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I always feel honoured to address the UNESCO Executive Board as the Representative of Bangladesh as it gives me an opportunity not only to talk about the people, peace and planet but also to contribute to the works of UNESCO for the greater cause of humanity.

But this time, with profound grief, I would like to inform you that presently Bangladesh is facing unprecedented influx of Rohingya people due to atrocities and human rights violation in the Rakhine State of Myanmar. Now, we are providing shelter and other humanitarian support for over 900,000 forcibly displaced Rohingya people from Myanmar. These innocent people are brutally driven out of their own land where they have been living for centuries. The Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina has proposed a five-point plan to resolve the issue at the 72nd Session of the UNGA. Bangladesh has urged immediate measures from Myanmar to stop the ongoing violence and ethnic cleansing in the Northern Rakhine State and to take back all Myanmar nationals who took shelter in Bangladesh over the years in safety, security and dignity. We call upon the international community to take effective measures in this regard.

Mr. Chair,

The Government of Bangladesh has taken massive programmes in all sectors to achieve the targets of SDGs within the stipulated time. In taking on the SDG journey, Bangladesh has been inspired by the dreams of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who had envisaged a prosperous Bangladesh with equal opportunities for all. We have already formulated Perspective Plan (2010-2021), in line with our two Five Year Plans. By this time, we have prepared a comprehensive action plan for all the Ministries and Divisions to implement SDGs.

The government has also adopted the "whole of society" approach to ensure wider participation of NGO's, development partners, private sectors, media and civil society organisations (CSOs) in this process.

Without Education, the world is void. Knowledge comes through education and understanding. Over the years, UNESCO has stressed on different aspects of access and quality of education. But, grey areas still remains. There are visible divisions between rural and urban areas in this regard. UNESCO should take all out effort so that the Member States can also ensure quality and inclusiveness in the remote rural areas.

To ensure inclusive education, we are addressing, particularly, the needs of the persons with disabilities including autistic children, ethnic minorities and marginalized people, including women. Since, 2010, the government of Bangladesh is distributing free textbooks among the students. Last year, we distributed 360 million free textbooks to the students of different grades . This has helped us to increase the access to education and now we are moving to ensure the quality of education, which is one of the major challenges of SDG-4.

Mr. Chair,

Terrorism and violent extremism remain constant threats to peace, stability and development. Terrorists have no religion, belief or race. We denounce the use of religion to justify violent extremism. Through her speech the Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina informed the 72nd Session of the UNGA, "I have involved families, women, the youth, the media and religious leaders at the community level to offset the spread of violent extremism." These initiatives have paid off at the national level. But we need to extend this success to the whole world and ensure peaceful coexistence of every human being on earth. Global Citizenship Education can be instrumental to ensure peaceful co-existence. Therefore, we support UNESCO' s inclusive programs and projects to encourage interfaith and intercultural dialogues at all strata of the society.

Mr. Chair,

Bangladesh greatly values the work of UNESCO in promoting and protecting the cultural Heritages. The Conventions like 1972 Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 2003 Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2005 Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions are the important tools for protecting and promoting various heritages and promoting sustainable development.

Our ‘ Baul Songs , Jamdani, Mangal Shobhajatra, a colourful procession brought out on the first day of Bengali New Year now belong to the cultural heritage of mankind. Bangladesh is mindful of the importance of the preservation and protection of the outstanding universal value of the world Heritage sites. We shall continue to work with UNESCO to promote cultural diversity to build bridges across communities and nations.

Mr. Chair,

We firmly believe that there lies a great potential for the developing countries in Science, technology and innovation. New sources of innovation, new ways of harnessing the power of science can resolve rising critical challenges of humanity. Climate change impact can reverse much of our development gains. Bangladesh remains on the frontline of that threat, but has not surrendered to it. We have taken a number of adaptation and mitigation measures with our own resources.

Water has a significant role in shaping our culture and life style. With a view to improving living conditions through better water management, Bangladesh is now formulating a Delta Plan. In this regard, Bangladesh would like to collaborate more with UNESCO-IHP (International Hydrological Programme (IHP)).

Bangladesh, in line with the objectives of the blue economy, is determined to initiate appropriate programmes for sustainable harnessing of the resources of the sea and carrying out research to develop relevant sectors of oceanography. Bangladesh also commends the capacity development initiatives of UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and would like to build up closer cooperation with IOC.

Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen,

As my tenure as the Representative of Bangladesh to Executive Board is going to end at this session, I take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all the members of the Executive Board for your support and cooperation.

On behalf of the Government of Bangladesh, I would like to express deep appreciation and sincere thanks to Director General Irina Bokova for her dynamic and outstanding role in heading this organization at a very crucial period of time.

Being also the Chairperson of CR Committee, I would like to express my gratefulness to all the members of CR committee and relevant UNESCO Officials the Secretariat and all concerned for your sincere support and cooperation extended during my Chairmanship in the CR Committee. After the four years of journey together in Executive Board, I can only express my feelings quoting few lines from T.S. Eliot' s poem:

".....But what have I, But what have I, my friend,
To give you, what can you receive from me?
Only the friendship and the sympathy....."

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, thank you all.