

## **Main Messages of the VNR 2020 of Bangladesh**

Bangladesh has adopted a people-centred development approach under the visionary and dynamic leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Since assuming office in 2009 with a landslide popular mandate, the Government has invested heavily to build a human-centred inclusive modern democracy as envisioned by the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Bangladesh has achieved the highest cumulative GDP growth globally in the last ten years and maintained strong macroeconomic stability, resulting in impressive socio-economic development, increased per capita income, and reduced poverty. Bangladesh fulfilled all three criteria for graduation to a developing country in March 2018.

The government adopted a comprehensive response plan embracing health and socio-economic recovery measures to control and contain the COVID-19 pandemic. Hon'ble Prime Minister announced stimulus packages of around US\$ 11.6 billion (3.3% of GDP) to be implemented in three phases- immediate, short and medium, until FY 2023-24.

The VNR process of Bangladesh is led by the “SDGs Implementation and Review Committee”. Our Whole-of-Society approach in implementing the SDGs has integrated the views of relevant stakeholders from central to the local levels.

The initiatives taken by the Government after VNR 2017 are as follows: (i) Preparing SDGs Action Plan with new projects and programmes, (ii) Launching SDGs Tracker to monitor implementation in terms of indicator-wise data updating, (iii) Finalizing SDGs Financing Strategy which included updating of the financing needs with an estimated additional amount of US\$ 928.5 billion being required for the FY 2017 to FY 2030, (iv) Convening the 1st National Conference on SDGs Implementation Review participated by representatives from the government, NGOs, CSOs, private sector, and DPs, (v) Forming National Data Coordination Committee to harmonize data generation, (vi) Developing a framework of collaboration between the Government and the UN agencies in Bangladesh, (vii) Approving 40 priority indicators for localizing SDGs; 39 of them will reinforce the implementation of the other indicators. The additional (+1) local indicator is to reflect the “Leaving no one behind”, the vulnerable issue where each District and Sub-District is lagging behind.

Under-five mortality and neonatal mortality have reached the target set for 2020. Prevalence of current tobacco use, family planning needs and reduction rates of poverty and hunger are on-track. The Government's commitment to social protection is evident in the enhanced budgetary allocation and extensive coverage. Gender parity in primary and secondary education has been achieved. The annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person and manufacturing value-added as a proportion of GDP has crossed the target set for 2020. Access to electricity is 96% on track with the commitment to provide electricity to every household by 2021. Numerous initiatives have been taken to ensure the safety, well-being, and security of vulnerable sections of the society including women and children.

However, the VNR 2020 has identified some challenges. Sustained GDP growth has not resulted in reducing income inequality. Although the health sector has shown notable

success, attaining Universal Health Coverage remains a challenge. Same is true for ensuring quality education at multilevel educational streams. Ensuring sustainable urbanization remains a challenge. The climate vulnerability will continue to be a threat to our economy. More target-oriented efforts are needed to facilitate domestic resource mobilization at the desired level.

The VNR of Bangladesh incorporates several good, innovative and collaborative practices that other countries can benefit from. We are also interested to learn from the experiences of others to address our challenges.

We attach much importance to meaningful international cooperation for attaining the SDGs. The global partnership is required in the form of finance and technology to implement National Social Security Strategy, Health Financing Strategy, and Introduction of the national voluntary pension scheme, integrated water resources management, innovative domestic resources mobilization, and introduction of modern and commercial agriculture focusing on smallholder farmers. We also need to allocate resources for human capital development and institution building. While enormous efforts are being made to transform Bangladesh digitally to ensure good governance, enhance efficiency, reduce wastage, we need greater cooperation in technology transfer to seize the opportunities created by the 4IR phenomenon.

Our efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda complement our endeavours to achieve our national aspiration of becoming an upper middle income country by 2031 and a developed country by 2041.