

**Intervention by Mr. Abdul Alim, representative of Bangladesh at an
interactive discussions on Integrated Water Resources Management on 12
April 2005**

Madam Chair,

Water management is complex and multi-dimensional. Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) needs to be tailored to the specific circumstances of each country. Panelist Mr. Joashim Harlin has focused on that.

Madam Chair,

The economy of Bangladesh is primarily dependent on natural resources. Geographically it is hugely disadvantaged. Out of our 54 rivers, 53 flow in from beyond our national territory. As a lower riparian country, water is a question of life and death in Bangladesh. During lean season, we face severe scarcity of surface water.

The scarce surface water consequently results in scaling down of the ground water levels. Dearth of water at both surface and ground levels gravely affects our navigation, irrigation, fishing, bio-diversity and the whole eco-system. Sometimes, in the dry season, it inflicts catastrophic droughts. While the monsoon brings forth excessive flow of water from the upstream that causes flood, and again it takes a heavy toll on our capital and human life.

The groundwater, till now, has been the best source of safe drinking water. We almost reached universal access to safe drinking water by 1993. But trace of arsenic in the sub-surface water has reduced the coverage to 70 percent and has affected 40 million people of the country. Arsenic in the shallow aquifer has compelled the augmentation and use of surface water. Intrusion of salinity in the ground water of coastal belt and island areas are the big challenges for ensuring safe drinking water. Water desalination and purification inflicted a huge cost burden on the government.

In case of international water, exchange of information and data on relevant aspects of hydrology would be critical to help each other understand the current and emerging problems in the management of the shared water resources. It is also critically important to ensure just and equitable shares for all co-riparian countries in the spirit of regional or sub-regional cooperation. Global support in this regard, could immensely benefit the process. The report of the SG also underscores this issue.

Madam Chair,

International society including multilateral organizations such as United Nations, regional development banks and inter-governmental organizations should take a firm role in promoting IWRM planning and implementation in each country. The international community should support the developing countries, particularly the LDCs, in their preparation and implementation of IWRM planning through financial and technical assistances.
