
BANGLADESH

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Statement by
His Excellency Mr. Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, BB
Hon'ble Minister for Water Resources
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh at the plenary of
The High-level Meeting of the
13th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on the theme:
Turning Political Commitments into Action
New York, 20 April 2005.

Mr. Chairman,
Hon'ble Ministers
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. However, I would like to highlight the following points:

We are towards the end of first cycle of the thematic cluster on water, sanitation and human settlements. This session will symbolize a model for the Commission for future clusters as set out in multi-year programme of work. The vision for CSD-13 is to take decisions on substantial and practical measures with real commitments of resources to, implement them.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh has achieved considerable success in its socio-economic sectors. We have factored in innovative homegrown ideas, like microcredit & non-formal education, which have contributed most effectively to our poverty eradication and social development processes.

Bangladesh has prepared its National Water Policy and National Water Management Plan in line with the principles of IWRM. The National Water Policy guides the management of the country's overall water resources by all concerned within the principles of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). The Policy envisages economic development, poverty alleviation, food security, public health and safety, protection of natural environment. The Government has also adopted a 25-year National Water Management Plan (NWMP) for the implementation of the Policy. The NWMP has also given adequate emphasis on the water supply, sanitation, environment

and social factors. The policy advocates minimizing disruption to the natural aquatic environment in-streams and water channels and other water bodies.

Geographically Bangladesh has been hugely disadvantaged. All our 57 major rivers flow in from beyond our national territory. As a lower riparian country, water is a question of life and death for Bangladesh. During lean season, we face severe scarcity of surface water. Uncertainty on availability of water and sensitivity of the transboundary River issues are the major threats to water resources development of the country.

Trace of arsenic in shallow aquifers further contributes to the pollution of water. Salinity intrusion due to lean flow of rivers in dry season is another threat to freshwater supply along the coastal regions. We need further international assistance, both technical and financial, for water purification and desalination efforts, as well as for preservation of biodiversity of the country.

International watercourses feed the people of the entire basin. Any unilateral withdrawal of water by the upper riparian gravely affects navigation, irrigation, fishing, bio-diversity and the whole eco-system at the other end. Any water infrastructure build in the upstream must take into account the economic, social and ecological impact down stream. We would welcome formulation of international rules and standards in these regards and their implementation particularly on trans-boundary flow of water to ensure equitable and fair distribution of this precious resource.

Mr. Chairman,

Efforts till date at the global level are far below the requirements to reach the goals and targets of JPOI and MDGs. Prevalence of extreme poverty continues to hold back the efforts towards achieving sustainable development. The lack of financial resources, transfer of technology and capacity building has seriously hindered the progress towards the implementation of these goals and targets.

Mr. Chairman,

In order to help the LDCs build their own capacities and achieve sustainable development, all LDC exports must be guaranteed duty free market access to their destinations. Tariff and non-tariff barriers and a highly inequitable international trade regime have further aggravated the situation in these resource-strapped countries. ODA flows need to be enhanced and made more effective qualitatively and quantitatively. Debt swaps for environmental and infrastructural investment could accelerate the development progress.

JPOI is feasible, but not easily reachable. The challenges are multifaceted. Success of JPOI hinges upon strong political resolve at both national and global levels. We must not fail.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.