



# BANGLADESH

**As delivered**

Statement by  
H.E. Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations  
at the Economic and Financial Committee on agenda item 55 (a):  
Countries in Special Situation: Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries  
New York, 10 November 2005

---

**Mr. Chairman,**

Could I begin by felicitating the Secretariat for presenting the first result-oriented progress report on the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action. I would also like to thank the High Representative for his inaugural remarks.

Bangladesh fully subscribes to the statements made by Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and Benin on behalf of the Group of the Least Developed Countries. We would however like to make the following additional points:

**Mr. Chairman,**

Bangladesh firmly believes that as regards development agenda each country must be in its driver's seat. In its application, there should be adequate policy space for the developing countries to draw up their own strategies to attain the MDGs and other development goals.

In our view, development is only achievable through a prudent mix of socio-economic strategies, sound macroeconomic management, appropriate use of external support, and within a culture of pluralism, liberalism, democracy, good governance, human rights and women's empowerment. It has been Bangladesh's experience that existence of a vibrant civil society is extremely important. And it is essential that a cooperative relationship exists between them and the public authorities. While development is primarily a national concern, it is the international community that must provide the global background and the enabling ambience. It is also imperative that all key stakeholders participate in this effort on a common denominator. These, in short, are also the essence of the Brussels Programme of Action.

**Mr. Chairman,**

As all are aware, democracy has taken a firm root in Bangladesh. Free and fair elections are held under the auspices of a neutral caretaker government - a constitutional evolution as unique as it has been successful. The essence of democracy is peaceful change and we have seen transitions of power in rotation. A key element of the last election was a voter turnout of over 70 per cent of the electorate, where women outnumbered men.

The government has established an Anti Corruption Commission, separating the judiciary from the executive, paving way to appoint an ombudsman and moving towards an independent Human Rights Commission. Most immediate focus has been to make these oversight institutions operational. I must, however, underline that the economy has to generate enough resources to enable these institutions render their mandates effectively.

Bangladesh has amply demonstrated that external assistance utilized with prudence and pragmatism, mixed with home-grown and indigenously evolved concepts, can be most effective in poverty alleviation. Micro-credit is a case in point. Our domestic initiatives need to be appropriately supported by the financial and technical assistance of the development partners.

We have completed our PRSP through a broad-based consultative process. Our policies and programmes, as reflected in our PRSP are being harmonized with those of the development partners. The UN country teams (UNCT) in Bangladesh have concluded CCA & UNDAF. Bangladesh has achieved considerable progress in her socio-economic sectors. The latest Human Development Report placed us among the medium human development category countries. A set of pragmatic and targeted policy approaches have made our progress possible.

The poverty head-count ratio in Bangladesh has reduced significantly and come down to 42.1 percent in 2004. With a view to achieving MDG target, the percentage should be reduced to 29.4 percent. This would require addressing another

20 million people over next 10 years. This, as one would imagine, is equal to or more than total population of many countries of the world.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Trade is a powerful engine of growth, poverty reduction and sustainable development. Utilizing trade potentials as well as the preferential market access has been a daunting challenge for LDCs. Sadly, the share of the 50 least developed countries in world trade is dwindling and currently stands at a meager 0.68 percent. To reverse this trend and for meaningful market access, it is a categorical imperative for the international community to do the following:

1. Allow immediate bound duty free quota free market access to all products from all LDCs with simplified rules of origin commensurate to the economic reality of the LDCs;
2. Eliminate all sorts of protectionism against LDC products, including arbitrary use of non-tariff, non-trade and other restrictive measures;
3. Provide adequate financial and technical assistance to the LDCs affected by compliance to WTO regimes, including MFA;
4. Grant temporary access to service providers from LDCs into developed country markets, including under mode 4 of GATS;
5. 'Aid for Trade' to bring in much needed finance to meet adjustment costs arising from trade reforms, strengthening supply capacity and competitiveness.

In this regard we view that UNCTAD study "Towards a New Trade Marshall Plan for Least Developed Countries" contains some important suggestions. These merit serious consideration.

Financial resource is the single most critical element in achieving the goals of the Brussels Programme of Action. We urge all developed countries that have not yet done so, to make available 0.20 per cent of their GNP as ODA to LDCs. In the same vein we commend those who have reached or exceeded the target. Distribution of ODA should be rational and not politically motivated. Our experience dictates that aid can be most effective when infused as direct budgetary support for nationally designed development projects.

Global economic governance and financial architecture need to be revitalized. This must be done with a view to ensuring coherence and consistency. The voice and effective participation of the LDCs must be further strengthened in international economic decision making and norm setting processes.

Most LDCs are extremely vulnerable to natural disasters and are highly susceptible to the adverse effects of global warming and climate change. Ensuring environmental sustainability is also a huge challenge for Bangladesh. Though we have learnt to live with floods, they aggravate poverty, damage infrastructure and hugely impede our progress. The international community must grant us with necessary technical and financial assistance to mitigate the impact of natural disasters and help with reconstruction.

External debt is a serious drag on the resource-strapped LDCs. We commend the recent G-8 proposal to cancel debt of some HIPC countries. This facility should also be extended to all LDCs. This would free up much needed funds for development.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Amid unprecedented global prosperity, the poor today are unfortunately more vulnerable than ever. The 740 million people in the LDCs are being increasingly marginalized. The report at hand is apprehensive that quite contrary to our common aspiration of halving poverty by 2015, if the current trend continues, number of poor in LDCs will rise by 41 per cent. The two previous programmes of action failed to deliver. We fervently hope that the Third does not meet the same fate. Next year, the General Assembly would undertake the mid-term comprehensive review to take stock of the achievements made as well as challenges ahead in implementing the goals and targets set at Brussels. Development partners need to redirect their interventions in line with the commitments made. Also they must ensure that necessary wherewithal is available. Only thus the Programme of Action would see fruition.

I thank you.