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# BANGLADESH

STATEMENT

BY

H. E. DR. IFTEKHAR AHMED CHOWDHURY  
AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BANGLADESH  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT

THE PLENARY MEETING OF  
THE 60<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ON

OCEANS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA; SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES, INCLUDING  
THROUGH THE 1995 AGREEMENT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
PROVISIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA  
OF 10 DECEMBER 1982 RELATING TO THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT  
OF STRADDLING FISH STOCKS AND HIGHLY MIGRATORY FISH STOCKS, AND  
RELATED INSTRUMENTS [*Agenda Items 75 (a) and (b)*]

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PERMANENT MISSION OF BANGLADESH TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
227 East 45<sup>th</sup> Street, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor, New York, NY 10017; Tel: 212 – 867 – 3434; Fax: 212 – 972 – 4038  
E-mail: [bangladesh@un.int](mailto:bangladesh@un.int); Website: [www.un.int/bangladesh](http://www.un.int/bangladesh)

Mr. President,

Some 140 million people live in Bangladesh on a territory of mere 147, 570 sq. km. Resources are scarce. And it is not easy to provide, therefore, this vast population with a decent living standard that we all aspire to. We, therefore, look at the sea, as a coastal country with seafaring traditions, for further resources. It is from this perspective that Bangladesh attaches particular importance to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which it joined in 2001, as the legal framework for peaceful uses of sea resources. It is heartening that the Convention is fast approaching universalization with as many as 148 States Parties. My country is committed to full implementation of the Convention.

Achievements of our generation, Mr. President, are many. We have split the atom. We have conquered the Mount Everest. We have left our footprint on the moon. There exists, however, a breath-taking gap in science in our knowledge of the resources of sea. Seabed covers some 71% of world's area. An amazing variety of living organisms are present in the sea. This has the potential of becoming one of the major sources of food for our peoples. Besides the traditional non-living resources of sea, such as oil and gas, it is estimated that the seabed contains close to 300 chemical elements. Many of these may eventually prove worthy of exploration and exploitation for the benefit of mankind. The Convention should provide us with necessary guidance in our common endeavours in that direction.

The founders of the Convention, which is often referred as the 'constitution of the sea', envisioned it, among others, as an instrument for ensuring equitable sharing of the resources of sea—living and non-living. It brought a modicum of order to a system fraught with potential conflict. Its scope of application is vast. It covers all uses of ocean space, including navigation and over-flight. It sets up rules for all uses of all the resources, living and non-living, on the high seas, on the ocean floor and beneath, on the continental shelf and in the territorial seas. It provides guidance to protect marine environment to ensuring sustainable use of marine resources. It also contains provisions for dealing with crimes committed at sea.

Oceans are of enormous value to world population. They provide us with food, water, raw materials and energy. The combined value of ocean resources, such as fish and minerals, including oil and gas, and uses, such as recreation industry, transportation and communications, is currently estimated to be about US\$7 trillion per year. There exists, however, a wide disparity in accruing benefits from this vast wealth between the developed and developing countries. We believe that enjoyment of marine resources must be conducted in a way that promotes and protects the interest of all. Such an approach would cherish the true meaning of the expression "common heritage of mankind", established by the Convention. We welcome the establishment of "reserved areas" under the International Seabed Authority in this regard. We also call for expedited establishment of the Enterprise.

Mr. President,

Enhanced marine scientific research is critical for sustainable exploration and exploitation of marine resources. We are disappointed that participation of marine scientists from developing countries in marine scientific research has progressively become marginal. It has effectively reduced the possibility of developing countries' participation in marine resources exploration and exploitation. This trend must be reversed. Expanding the knowledge base of scientists from developing countries is critical to their full enjoyment of the rights provided for in the Convention.

Bangladesh, a developing country, could also benefit from technical cooperation with other States Parties, developed and developing alike, and relevant institutions in the areas of capacity building, transfer of technology and development of expertise in the areas covered by the Convention. Such cooperation might include training facilities and joint surveys. Training on legal issues and on preparation of national submission regarding delineation of continental shelf would be of immense benefit in building our national capacity. Joint survey for coastal and seabed mapping as well as survey of the resources therein would also be useful. We appreciate efforts of the Division for Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea (DOALOS) in this regard. Bangladesh calls for strengthening and expanding its programmes in the areas of human resource development.

Mr. President,

More than half of the world's population now lives within 100 km. of coasts. Prospect of larger economic activities surrounding the sea would inevitably result in increased movement of people to the coastal areas. According to one estimate, up to three-fourth of the world's population would make coastal areas their home by 2025. Such large-scale movement of populations to coastal areas coupled with significant increase in economic activity and industrialization along the coastline—such as oil and gas exploration, mining, fish farming, tourism, development of ports, etc.—will put enormous pressure on coastal areas. We ought to remain prepared for the consequences, including environmental effects, of such large-scale relocation of human and economic activities surrounding the sea.

The offshore areas of Bangladesh including its Exclusive Economic Zone have enormous riches in terms of bio-diversity and energy potential. This natural treasure house is now under increasing threat of pollution caused both by land-based activities and by ocean-going vessels. Bangladesh is particularly vulnerable to the devastating effects of major oil spill. A single such incident could bring enormous sufferings to the lives and livelihood of the people in the coastal belt.

It is in this context that Bangladesh attaches utmost importance to an ecosystem-based approach in exploration and exploitation of all marine resources—living and non-living. Such an approach should preserve biodiversity and not cause harm to the marine

environment. We must strike a balance between marine resources exploitation and conservation of marine environment. Pollution of marine environment through our land-based activities, such as dumping of waste, as well as unregulated shipping activities has become a concern for all. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in areas both within and outside national jurisdiction has become a reason for major concern. We must act now to apply the provisions of the Convention in this regard if we are to keep the sea as a 'repository of resources'.

We are also concerned at the continuing problem of crimes committed at the sea. Transnational crimes, including piracy and armed robbery, are threatening marine safety and security. Its effect on international trade by sea, which carries about 90% of goods, has proved to be colossal.

We value the work of the three bodies – the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea, the International Seabed Authority and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf – created by the Convention. As a State Party, Bangladesh is committed to actively and constructively engaging in their activities. We hope to work with other States Parties to realize our shared vision of sustainable use of sea resources for the common welfare of mankind. In the process, we also aspire to reap our due share of benefits for the people of Bangladesh.

We believe that full, equitable and judicious implementation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea would advance our common endeavours for the improvement of living standards of our peoples in a big way. If we can achieve this, I am sure, it would be one of our greatest contributions towards building a prosperous world for our generation, and also for the generations unborn. The path ahead of us might be long and arduous. But we are determined to sail through the rough sea, for we all know that reaching the port would be worth our while.

I thank you Mr. President.