Mr. President, Secretary General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Today is 26th March---our Independence Day. On this very day in 1971 when the enemy forces let loose a genocide, we started a life of death and destruction, a life of hope and sorrows. However, after nine months of bloody war, in which 3 million sacrificed their sacred lives, 10 million were forced to take shelter in the neighboring country India, and after carnage of chastity of thousands of courageous female, and after eclipse of total economy and destruction of the development sector of the country we achieved our Independence. It is pathetic that two days prior to our independence, our intellectuals were rounded up and all were butchered blind-folded. So, throughout the history of Bangladesh, our Independence Day is the observance of joy and sorrow together. While we rejoice the victory, we cry for the dear and near ones. No wonder, Shelly has very rightly mentioned, ‘our sweetest songs are those that tell of the saddest thoughts’.

This year, yet another sorrow has impinged on us to endure and commemorate at the passing away of our Honorable President Md. Zillur Rahman, the most venerated political personality in our country after the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. We have gathered here today with heavy hearts to reminisce his life and achievements. I sincerely thank the President of the General Assembly Vuk Jeremic, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and distinguished representatives of the UN Member States for showing respect to this towering personality of Bangladesh.

President Rahman was born on 9 March 1928 and he died in the same month on March 20, 2013. He was 84 years of age. Born as a British Indian, spent his youth struggling against injustice and died as a national hero, President Rahman was a 'beacon of light and wisdom'.

26 March 2013, 10am-1 pm, UN General Assembly Hall.
Because of his amiable disposition, a perfect gentleman in the truest sense of the term, he earned respect amongst all in a country where political polarization is acute and disturbing. He graduated with a Master in History and a law degree, and started his career as a lawyer.

While he was a student, young Rahman participated in the historic *Bengali Language Movement of 1952* when people shed blood to protect and preserve their mother language and of course, culture and values. He was first elected as a member of Pakistan's National Parliament in 1970 and during the Bangladesh Liberation War, Mr. Rahman actively participated in the Bangladesh government in exile. After the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, he was arrested by the military junta, and spent four years in prison. Mr. Zillur Rahman served as a Cabinet Minister during 1996 through 2001. He sworn in as the 19th president of Bangladesh on 12 February 2009 and he discharged his responsibilities until his death on 20 March 2013.

Mr. Rahman was elected as the General Secretary of his party for record four times in the history of Bangladesh. After the 1/11 debacle in Bangladesh in 2007, when future of multi-party democracy and stability was at stake, and when the nation was is total disarray, Md. Zillur Rahman rose to the occasion and took the lead and played a critical role for restoration of democracy. His wisdom, his experience and expertise and his political maturity triumphed and the nation felt a sigh of relief. No wonder, he got elected as President unopposed.

Sad news is, Mr. Rahman passed many valuable years of his life behind bar; he was arrested during our language movement, during our anti-military movements in 1960s and a verdict was given in absentia for his 20 years of prison time when he joined the Liberation war. Sadly, his wife, Mrs. Ivy Rahman, President of the Women section of the Bangladesh Awami League party was assassinated by a bomb blast at an anti-terrorism public rally in August 2004 along with 23 others. That attack was intended to kill then Opposition Leader and current Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina who survived but was injured.

President Rahman was a father figure full of wisdom and patience. I echo Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina who rightly observed, and I quote, "the country has lost a guardian". I believe, we can really pay our homage to Late President Zillur Rahman if we truly follow his mantra of friendship to all and malice to none, if we truly follow his wisdom and maturity of working together, working for good of mankind and for participatory democracy with commitment and determination, his departed soul will rest in eternal peace. May Allah bless his soul--- Ameen.

I thank the United Nations and I thank all of you, once again for being with us on this very special event. Thank you.