Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

I call this high level meeting to order.

Today's topic for discussion is; “Resilient Design – To Build or Not To Build?” This goes well with current General Assembly’s focus on “Post 2015 development agenda – setting the stage – Vision to Action”. The global leadership has been debating as to how should we plan the future development framework ensuring an inclusive and equitable development so that the next generation does not suffer from unplanned, lopsided and imprudent action.

The world is becoming urbanized with every passing day. Bangladesh, which has been an agrarian and village based land for almost its entirety, a history that can be traced back to thousands of years, have recently seen the influx of city bound people for myriad reasons resulting in – rapid development of urban areas and also overcrowding of cities and towns. Few years ago, less than 9% of the population of Bangladesh used to live in urban areas, in contrast, in 2010 as per estimate, nearly 28%, I mean, more than a quarter of its population live in urban areas and its rising. In fact, the growth rate of urban population is more than 3.5% per annum.

Ladies and gentlemen,

You will probably agree with me that the picture that I have drawn for Bangladesh is nothing unique. All over the South, we are having the same experience – economic development at a pace that is not compatible with environment and climate stability. With rapid and at times unplanned infrastructure developments, we are somehow losing the “harmony” – a key word when we consider the issue of sustainability.
Bangladesh, on the other hand, is an example of resilience to the world. Being a deltaic country with vulnerable location at the mouth of a bay with history of cyclones and natural calamities we cannot avoid being hit by natural disasters. In fact, among the countries, Bangladesh ranks as one of the most vulnerable country in terms of natural disasters and climate change. At the same time, let me share with you that we rank high in terms of resilience as well. Although we have been successful to save lives in natural calamities due our Disaster Preparedness Program but loss and destruction of property and housing needs lot of help as our houses are mostly non-resilient to cyclones.

Secondly, resilient housing needs to be designed in a holistic way taking consideration of social, cultural, environmental and economic sustainability. Owing to erratic climatic changes and global warming, river erosion has become increasingly disastrous and at times, such erosion washes away houses causing untold suffering. Third, at times owing to unplanned and mushroom growth of urbanization, housing are erected in floodplains or by obstructing normal flow of waters that are susceptible to flooding and therefore, the nation needs planned urbanization not only to protect vulnerable people but also better floodplain management and eco-living.

Therefore, to ensure the safety of the people, we need accommodations and housing that are environmentally sound, economically affordable, socially and culturally amenable and more importantly, disaster proof. At the same time, the importance of mobility that is resilient to disasters cannot be ignored.

During this session, we will hear views and ideas from some leading experts in the field of resilient urbanization, civil protection, rebuilding and rehabilitation. With contribution from the presenters and the participants present, we will hopefully come up with ideas on how to develop the economies ensuring that the infrastructure follow the resilient design, and at the same time keeping in mind that that three pillars of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental – are on stable footing.

Now let me introduce you to the distinguished speakers of this session, as well as the moderator for this event.