**Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh**

**Prime Minister’s Office**

**Old Parliament Building, Tejgaon, Dhaka**

**Keynote Speech on “Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Human Rights: Perspective Bangladesh” to be delivered in the “International Conference on SDGs & Human Rights” organized by National Human Rights Commission, Bangladesh**

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| **Keynote Speaker** | : | Mr Md. Abul Kalam Azad, Principal Coordinator (SDGs Affairs), Prime Minister’s Office, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh |
| **Date** | : | 1st November 2018 |
| **Time** | : | 9.30 am |
| **Venue** | : | Hotel Le Meridien, Dhaka |

# **Introduction**

It is well known to us that building on the accomplishments of their predecessors the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in September 2015, Heads of State and Government of the members countries of the United Nations agreed to set the world on a path towards sustainable development through the adoption of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld). To be achieved by the year 2030, this agenda includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which set out quantitative objectives across the three dimensions of sustainable development — economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion. The SDGs form a cohesive and integrated package of global aspirations and provide a framework for shared action for people, planet and prosperity to be implemented by all countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership. There are, moreover, 169 targets along with the 17 goals which are global in nature and universally applicable, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. Hence, the SDGs, built on most participatory manner in UN history, address the most pressing global challenges of our time, and is therefore broader, comprehensive, far-reaching, people-centric, universal, integrated, transformational and more complex than the MDGs. The cornerstone of SDGs is inclusivity that is revealed by the phrase “Leaving no one behind” and “Reach the furthest behind first”. So, all actors need to move away from business-as-usual approaches towards the sustainable use of resources and peaceful and inclusive societies.

# **The 2030 Agenda and human rights**

The declaration of the 2030 Agenda recognizes human rights as foundational to the Agenda. It underlines the Agenda’s grounding in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and international human rights treaties and emphasizes states’ responsibilities to respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind.

Out of 17 goals, 9 goals (goal 1, goal 3, goal 4, goal 5, goal 6, goal 8, goal 10, goal 16 & goal 17) and their relevant targets correspond to essential dimensions of states’ human rights commitments, as outlined in international human rights treaties, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), as well as other international and regional instruments and documents relating to human rights. The pledge to “leave no one behind” mirrors the fundamental human rights principles of non-discrimination and equality.

# **SDGs and specific human rights references**

Let us try to discuss the linkages of sustainable development goals with the Universal declaration of human rights (UDHR) and other international conventions.

3.1 In the Sustainable Development Goal-1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere), targets include eradicating extreme poverty; implementing social protection measures; and ensuring equal access of men and women to economic resources. We can relate these targets with the (a) Right to an adequate standard of living of article 25 of UDHR; (b) Right to social security of article 22 of UDHR; and (c) Equal rights of women in economic life of article 11, 13, 14, 15 and 16 of CEDAW.

3.2 In the Sustainable Development Goal-3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) targets include reducing maternal mortality; ending preventable child deaths; ending or reducing AIDS and other diseases; universal health coverage, affordable essential medicines, sexual and reproductive health care; vaccine research, and access to medicines. We can relate these targets with the (a) Right to life of article 3 of UDHR; (b) Right to health of article 25 of UDHR; (c) Special protection for mothers and children of article 10 of ICESCR; (d) Right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its application of article 27 of UDHR; (e) International cooperation of article 28 of UDHR.

3.3 In the Sustainable Development Goal-4 (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all) targets include universal access to free, quality pre-primary, primary and secondary education; improving vocational skills; equal access to education; expanding education facilities, scholarships, and training of teachers. We can relate these targets with the (a) Right to education of article 26 of UDHR; (b) Equal rights of women and girls in the field of education of article 10 of CEDAW; (c) Right to work, including technical and vocational training of article 6 of ICESCR; (d) International cooperation of article 28 of UDHR.

3.4 In the Sustainable Development Goal-5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) targets include eliminating discrimination and violence against women and girls; valuing unpaid care and domestic work; ensuring the full participation of women; access to reproductive health care; and equal access of women to economic resources. We can relate these targets with the (a) Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, article 1 to 5 of CEDAW; (b) Right to decide the number and spacing of children of article 12 of CEDAW; (c) Special protection for mothers and children of article 10 of ICESCR; (d) Elimination of violence against women and girls of article 1 to 6 of CEDAW; (e) Right to just and favourable conditions of work of article 7 of ICESCR.

3.5 In the Sustainable Development Goal-6 (Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all) targets include ensuring universal and equitable access to safe, affordable drinking water, sanitation and hygiene for all; reducing pollution; increasing water-use efficiency; and promoting participatory management of water and sanitation services. We can relate these targets with the (a) Right to safe drinking water and sanitation of article 11 of ICESCR; (b) Right to health of article 25 of UDHR; and (c) Equal access to water and sanitation for rural women of article 14 of CEDAW.

3.6 In the Sustainable Development Goal-8 (Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all) targets include promoting sustained economic growth; improving resource efficiency in production and consumption; full and productive employment and decent work for all; eradicating forced and child labour and trafficking; protecting labour rights including those of migrant workers; and increasing access to financial services. We can relate these targets with the (a) Right to work and to just and favourable conditions of work of article 23 of UDHR; (b) Prohibition of slavery, forced labour, and trafficking of persons of article 4 of UDHR; (c) Equal rights of women in relation to employment of article 11 of CEDAW; (d) Prohibition of child labour of article 32 of CRC; and (e) Equal labour rights of migrant workers of article 25 of CMW.

3.7 In the Sustainable Development Goal-10 (Reduce inequality within and among countries) targets include promoting higher growth rates for the bottom 40 per cent; promoting social, economic and political inclusion; reducing inequalities in opportunities and outcomes; ensuring social protection for all; securing participation in economic decision making; facilitating migration, and reducing transaction costs for migrant remittances. We can relate these targets with the (a) Right to equal and non-discrimination of article 2 of UDHR; (b) Right to participate in public affairs of article 21 of UDHR; (c) Right to social security of article 22 of UDHR; (d) Promotion of conditions for international migration of article 64 of CMW; and (e) Right of migrants to transfer their earnings and savings of article 47 of CMW.

3.8 In the Sustainable Development Goal-16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels) targets include reducing all forms of violence; ending violence against and trafficking of children; promoting rule of law and justice for all; reducing illicit financial and arms flows, corruption and bribery; developing effective institutions; participation in decision making at all levels; legal identity for all. We can relate these targets with the (a) Right to life, liberty and security of the person of article 3 of UDHR; (b) Protection of children from all forms of violence, abuse or exploitation of article 19 and 37 of CRC; (c) Right to access to justice and due process of article 8 & 10 of UDHR; (d) Right to legal personality of article 6 of UDHR; (e) Right to participate in public affairs of article 21 of UDHR; and (f) Right to access to information of article 19 of UDHR.

3.9 In the Sustainable Development Goal-17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development) targets include strengthening domestic and international resources; debt sustainability; technology transfer and capacity building; promoting trade; enhancing policy and institutional coherence; respecting countries’ policy space; promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships; measurements for progress, disaggregated data. We can relate these targets with the (a) Right of all peoples to self-determination of article 1 of ICCPR; (b) Right of all peoples to development, & international cooperation of article 28 of UDHR; (c) Right of everyone to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its application, including international cooperation in the scientific field of article 27 of UDHR; and (d) Right to privacy of article 12 of UDHR.

# **Actions taken by the Government of Bangladesh to implement the Agenda 2030**

It is well known to us that Bangladesh has conspicuous success stories in Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The country is also set to implement SDGs with some initiatives that are unique in nature. The development approach of the country aims to effectively drive SDGs implementation by whole of society approach which incorporates the private sector, CSOs, NGOs, Development Partners, media among others. The actions already taken by the Government of Bangladesh with respect to SDGs implementation are described below:

* + Our national development strategies i.e. ongoing 7th Five Year Plan (2016-20) are well aligned with the SDGs. The 7th FYP has 15 priority areas to be monitored, and each of them are linked to SDGs.
  + Government has mapped the Ministries/Divisions setting the responsibilities for each corresponding indicator of SDGs, designating them as lead, co-lead or associate implementer according to their Allocation of Business.
  + Taking inputs from co-lead and associated Ministries, the lead Ministries/Divisions have finalized their own Action Plan to implement the SDGs in a constructed and coordinated manner.
  + A Data Gap Analysis for SDGs has also been conducted to check the availability of data in the existing data generation system of Bangladesh and to produce required data to monitor the progress.
  + National Data Coordination Committee (NDCC) under Secretary, Statistics and Informatics Division has been created taking representatives from data producing institutions.
  + It is expected that three successive Five Year Plans would be required for full implementation of SDGs in Bangladesh, and in line with that milestone targets are set for 2020, 2025 and 2030 for different indicators of SDGs in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework of SDGs.
  + Bangladesh has designed SDG Tracker, an innovative tool that will help measuring achievements in attaining SDGs. This data repository will facilitate the tracking of progress against each goal and target through multiple visualization schemes and improve situation analysis and performance monitoring. It will create an environment of healthy competition among various organizations in terms of achieving the SDGs. In line with the South South Cooperation, Bangladesh is going to provide technical support to some interested countries with a view to monitoring progress of SDGs following the experience of SDGs Tracker of Bangladesh.
  + The Government of Bangladesh has finalized SDGs Financing Strategy. The strategy estimates that an additional amount of US$ 928.48 billion will be required from FY 2017 to FY 2030, which is 19.75% of the accumulated GDP. The annual average cost of SDGs will be US$ 66.32 billion (constant prices) for this period.
  + Localization of SDGs would be crucial to provide benefits of economic growth to the poor, vulnerable and marginalized people. Hence, Upazila Model and District Model have been drafted to localize the SDGs in Bangladesh to address the local context and fulfil the aspiration of SDGs, “Leave no one behind”. Stakeholders’ participation in local level projects design and monitoring will be encouraged.
  + SDGs are huge, interactive, interdependence and complex. A 20-member high level implementation & monitoring Committee has been formed. Also high level coordination mechanism representing institutions of the public and private sector, academia and civil society has been established. On 4th to 6th July 2018 around 2000 participants from Government, NGOs, DPs, Private sector, Academia, media, CSO etc. participated in the SDGs Implementation Review (SIR) Conference. These mechanism include both data and qualitative assessments on progress and challenges of SDGs.

# **Actions taken by Government of Bangladesh with respect to Human Rights**

Article 11 of the Constitution of People’s Republic of Bangladesh states “The Republic shall be a democracy in which fundamental human rights and freedom and respect for the dignity and worth of the human person shall be guaranteed.” In line with this constitutional obligations and international commitments to human rights, the first Perspective Plan of Bangladesh (2010-2021) approved by the Government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, envisioned Bangladesh to be a middle income country by 2021 where (i) every citizen has equal opportunities to achieve his/her fullest potential; (ii) all citizens enjoy a quality of life where basic health care and adequate nutrition are assured; (iii) all citizens have access to a modern, technical, and vocational education tailored to meet the human resource needs of a technologically advancing nation; (iv) sustainability of development is ensured through better protection from climate change and natural disasters; (v) there is respect for the principles of democracy, rule of law, and human rights; (vi) gender equality is assured; so are the rights of ethnic populations and of all other disadvantaged groups including persons with disability; and (vii) the diversity and creativity of all people are valued and nurtured.

Some important actions taken by the government in the field of human rights are mentioned below:

1. Prevalence of law and order in society is a sine qua non for economic progress. All institutions of law enforcement and justice are working with greater fairness and efficiency resulting in greater public confidence in the rule of law.
2. National Human Rights Commission was established by the National Human Rights Commission Act of 2009 as a reflection of the commitment of human rights protection and development. Bangladesh has ratified 8 UN charters out of 9 main charters related to human rights, reflecting respect for human rights as a state.
3. With respect to the Rohingyas deported from Myanmar, the Hon’ble Prime Minister has been honoured internationally by establishing a brilliant example in the history of humanity.
4. Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2012 has been passed and national strategy paper 2015-2017 to prevent money laundering and terrorist financing formulated. Monitoring cell headed by solicitors and case management committee constituted in every district to speed up the criminal case.
5. Alternative Dispute Resolution has been established in the country.
6. Independent Election Commission was constituted by the Search Committee on the opinion of all stakeholders. The long-lasting, safe, accurate and reliable Smart Identity Card is being distributed to the citizens of Bangladesh, keeping image of ten fingers. Using the Candidate Information Management System and Result Management System software, transparency, accountability and efficiency have increased greatly in election management.
7. Democratic rights have been upheld by the elected representatives of the party through the nomination of political parties in the local government elections.
8. Annual performance agreement has been established with a view to strengthening accountability framework.
9. National Integrity Strategies (NIS) has been formulated.
10. Union Digital Centres (UDC) have been established to remove technological barriers between rural and urban areas.
11. Implementation of 'Right to Information Act, 2009' enacted and Information Commission has been established.
12. The Government has adopted the ‘National Women Development Policy (NWDP)’ in 2011 that aims at eliminating all forms of discrimination against women by empowering them to become equal partners of development.
13. In favour of persons with disabilities the government has enacted the following laws: Special Integrated education policy for the disabled person 2009, Rights and Protection of Persons with disabilities Act 2013, Neuro-development Trust Act 2013, and Persons with Disabilities Rights and Protection Act 2015.

# **Conclusion**

The Hon’ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh has a unique opportunity to be present in 2000 and in 2015 at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) when both Millennium Declaration and SDGs were approved. It has given her a championship and buy-in on SDGs. The 7th Five Year Plan steers the national SDGs implementation planning that promotes national policy coherence. To build effective and accountable institutions and improve governance in public service the Government has been implementing some governance related initiatives, e.g., Annual Performance Agreement (APA), Citizen Charter, National Integrity Strategy (NIS), and Grievance Redress System (GRS), establishment of Human Rights Commission, and enactment of Rights to information act. Our Hon’ble Prime Minister is politically committed to have strong, responsive and accountable institutions in the country because those would be instrumental for achieving Sustainable Development Goals, ‘Vision 2021’ and to build a non-communal, discrimination free, democratic, knowledge-based, technology driven, peaceful and developed country by 2041.