

D-8 Summit

Opening statement by

H.E. Sheikh Hasina

Hon'ble Prime Minister
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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Dhaka, Bangladesh

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Your Excellencies the Honourable Heads of State and Government,
Excellencies the Foreign Ministers,
The Secretary General,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu Alaikum and a very good day.

It is a historic moment for Bangladesh to hold the Chairmanship of the D-8 again after completing a full cycle. I would like to congratulate Your Excellency Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan (রিজেপ তাইয়্বিপ এরদোয়ান), President of the Republic of Turkey for your successful tenure as D-8 Chair. I also thank the Secretary General of the D-8 for his contributions.

2. I will always have a soft corner for this organisation as I am one of the founding members of D-8. When D-8 was established in 1997, I attended the first Summit in Istanbul as Prime Minister. I was also the Chair when we hosted the 2nd D-8 Summit in Dhaka in 1999.

3. Bangladesh is chairing the 10th D-8 Summit at a unique time of the history of Bangladesh as well as the world. We are celebrating the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the greatest Bangalee of all times. We are also celebrating Golden Jubilee of our independence. This year we got final recommendation from CDP of the United Nations to graduate from Least Developed Country to a Developing Nation. On the other hand, the world is going through an unprecedented pandemic which has caused huge loss of lives & livelihood. This reminds us the

requirement of global platforms and global actions. With so many historic events taking place our Chairmanship will assume special significance.

Excellencies,

4. The theme "Partnership for Transformative World: Harnessing the Power of Youth and Technology" is very appropriate under the existing condition. It is also very relevant for Bangladesh as the country has a significant proportion of young population. During the Covid-19 pandemic this young population has contributed economy by using digital technology. The UN has estimated that the global economy is expected to lose nearly 8.5 trillion dollars in output over the next two years because of pandemic. To overcome the challenges we need effective partnership and greater cooperation in the field of technology and innovation.

5. Just before the pandemic situation, Bangladesh had achieved the remarkable GDP growth rate of 8.15 per cent. By putting equal emphasis on lives and livelihood, even during the pandemic, Bangladesh achieved significant growth rate. Other than stimulus package worth 1.24 trillion taka which is around 4.4% of our GDP, our success in overriding the crisis is largely due to our investment in food security, agriculture and adequate social safety nets. We are providing different kinds of social protection support to more than 9.5 million people of different ages and genders. On the occasion of the centenary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, we have taken an initiative to provide home to every single homeless person in Bangladesh.

6. Women's empowerment and equal involvement at all levels has also been an important factor of our economic stability. Bangladesh is one of the top

readymade garment exporters in the world, and more than 85 per cent of the workers in this sector are women, significantly contributing to the society and the economy. The percentage of enrolment in schools is higher for girls than boys. Women are active in all professions as well as in politics. They are also serving in UN peacekeeping missions abroad.

Excellencies,

7. Bangladesh places utmost importance to education at all levels. We are providing free education up to higher school level. Bangladesh has become a popular destination for foreign students who want to pursue higher studies. In this regard, I believe that the SEACO University Network will provide a good platform for new and trendier subjects including the 4IR and also a stable online education platform for our students.

Excellencies,

8. Bangladesh has achieved phenomenal socio-economic growth even after the increasing frequency of natural disasters. Last year, in addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bangladesh had to bear the brunt of cyclone Amphan, and prolonged flood in large parts of the country. It is estimated that close to 1 per cent of GDP of Bangladesh is lost due to climate change, which in all probabilities will increase in the coming decades if the climate change phenomenon is not reversed. This calls for urgent and meaningful cooperation among us for adaptation and mitigation measures. For effective and sustainable development within D-8, it is now imperative that we cooperate and assist each other also in the issue of climate change. As the Chair of the Climate Vulnerable Group (CVF) we will be happy to work with the D-8 Member States on the issue of implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Excellencies,

9. Another urgent issue that is causing severe impact on our environment, society and the economy is the Rohingya crisis. Bangladesh provided shelter to 1.1 million Rohingyas purely on humanitarian ground. We have insisted from the beginning that the Rohingyas have to go back to the Rakhine State in Myanmar in a safe, dignified, voluntary and sustainable manner. Unfortunately, it has been more than three years after their influx into Bangladesh, and the repatriation process is yet to start. We are also concerned that if the crisis is not resolved, this may create security concerns in the region and beyond. We are grateful to the members of the D-8 for your support and urge you to put pressure on Myanmar for the repatriation of the Rohingyas.

Excellencies,

10. I would like to briefly touch upon one very important issue for D-8, the power and potential of the youth who have made breakthroughs in business ideas, models, innovations and technologies. The youths of our countries can be encouraged to come together through the business initiatives at private and even government to private level. The D-8 Business Forum together with the 1st D-8 Youth Summit has created this rare opportunity.

11. Bangladesh has put emphasis on use of transformative technology for the last one decade, turning our country into a “Digital Bangladesh”. With more than six hundred thousand IT professionals, 28 high-tech parks and technology friendly initiatives, Bangladesh is moving forward, optimally using the power of youth and technology.

Excellencies,

12. Another key area of cooperation where we need to focus more is the area of trade. D-8 Secretariat can provide information of potentials within the Group and explore scope for "Trade and Investment Cooperation Agreements". Such information could also help us in increasing trade and investment dialogue, opening of options for more trade and investment. Trade is ultimately driven by the private sector. It is important to facilitate the travel of businessmen for which Bangladesh has joined six D-8 members in ratifying "Simplification of Visa Procedures for the Businessmen of the D-8 Member States."

Excellencies,

13 Before concluding let me highlight four points for our cooperation:

- a. Harnessing the power of our youth through skill development,
- b. Utilizing the full potential of ICT,
- c. Creating necessary legal, institutional and infrastructural framework, and
- d. Improving connectivity to facilitate trade and investment.

14. The D-8, which was established twenty-four years ago, is now poised to deliver its goal of economic development through creating synergies. Dhaka Declaration and the Decennial Roadmap that would be adopted today would provide us with the necessary impetus for harnessing our combined potentials, and realising our shared goal of a prosperous future.

I thank you.
