

Report of the D-8 Youth Summit 2021

05 April 2021, Dhaka, Bangladesh

The first ever D-8 Youth Summit 2021 was held virtually at the side line of the 10th D-8 Summit on 5 April 2021. Ministers and dignitaries of the D-8 Member States (**Annex-I**), Secretary-General of D-8, and dynamic and enthusiastic young leaders from civil societies, business enterprises, SMEs, educational institutions, and representatives from government institutions participated in the summit. With the theme of “*entrepreneurship for sustainable transformation*”, the summit featured separate statements by the Ministers/Senior officials of D-8 member countries, a keynote presentation, and a brainstorming session of the young participants followed by presentations on major findings. Bangladesh is hosting this Youth Summit at a time when the country is observing twin celebrations of the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the golden jubilee of the independence of Bangladesh.

1. Opening of the Meeting

The Summit commenced with the welcome remarks by the Secretary of the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Bangladesh. The Secretary lauded the unbreakable spirit and the gracious presence of the youth at the summit. Paying homage to the Father of the Nation of Bangladesh and terming him as an icon of the youth, the Secretary reminded how the great leader Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with his unparalleled spirit of youth and leadership contributed to Bangladesh. He also paid his respect to the freedom fighters of liberation war of Bangladesh. Expressing deep gratitude to the Hon’ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh, he noted that the government charted national development plans and now Bangladesh is graduating from the LDC status. He wished that the meeting be held physically as Dhaka is coloured with the twin celebrations.

The Secretary stressed the need to mobilise the youth for civic stability, good governance and innovation in the D-8 region as the D-8 has a huge demographic asset. This demographic power of D-8 countries would help the region advance in science, technology, sports and culture. He also emphasised on behaviour and mind-set for infusing energy and enthusiasm as the need for extraordinary leaders is felt everywhere at the backdrop of Covid-19 pandemic and fourth industrial revolution. Appreciating the theme of the programme, he urged the youth to ignite their minds and free the spirit in the breakout sessions of the summit. He expressed his hope that the youth, the change agents, will practice simulation of decision making. This will help build a resilient and sustainable future.

2. Statement by D-8 Secretary General

The Director of D-8 read out the statement of the D-8 Secretary-General. The Secretary-General commended Bangladesh for this timely brilliant idea to engage the youth and connect them for cooperation and innovation. He urged the youth to galvanise their potentials. As the summit is first of its kind in the D-8 platform, he hoped that the productive spirit of youth of D-8 countries will drive the economic and environmental sustainability through technology and innovation. On this note, he marked the youth demography of D-8 nations as an incredible demographic asset. If this working age population is leveraged properly, the countries would achieve competitive edge and when shared as common goals among the Member States in trade, economy, commerce, science, technology, sports and culture. He advised to utilise the golden opportunity of this platform to cooperate among themselves. He also cited the examples of D-8 International University in Iran and D-8's collaboration with Hidayah Group of Malaysia to promote and support the youth of D-8 Member States.

3. Remarks by the Ministers/Senior Officials

During his statement, Md. Zahid Ahsan Russel, MP, Minister of State for Youth and Sports of Bangladesh recalled the Father of the Nation Bangbandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the supreme sacrifice of the liberation war fighters. He thanked the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh for her visionary policies with, to and for youth to reap the benefits of the demographic dividend to achieve Vision 2041 for Bangladesh. On behalf of the Bangladesh Government, the State Minister thanked everyone for celebrating this occasion and appreciated the bond of friendship. He noted that digital Bangladesh is marching towards achieving SDGs by intensifying cooperation and enhancing trade relations among the D-8 countries. He expressed his conviction that youth power can transform and achieve impossible. He affirmed that Bangladesh considers youth as key for driving force of the economy. Referring to the National Youth Policy 2017, the five-year plan, the government has formulated policies that centre round the goals and aspirations of the youth. The government has provided training to about 6.3 million youth across the country for entrepreneurship and employment.

The advancement of artificial intelligence and big data has taken the humanity into the fourth industrial revolution era, he added. Consequently, the physical, industrial, financial and administrative structures are experiencing paradigm shift. In this context, the State Minister asked for the proper guidance to the youth of the D-8

nations. More importantly, the pandemic-crippled world has seen stricter supply chain. D-8 needs to demonstrate leadership to deal with this pandemic. A balance between life and livelihood needs to be drawn. In this connection, he referred to the stimulus programme of Bangladesh Government to safeguard the businesses from devastation. He also noted that existing policy making demands continuous update everyday with issues like corona virus and climate change.

The Director-General of the Central administration for Projects and Training of the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Egypt presented the “banana experiment—five monkey in a cage” to elicit that Egypt wants to push the youth out of comfort zone and inspire them to start something new. The country creates opportunities for youth to have national and international partnership. Egypt also imparts training, and provides funding and other support for start-up projects. They support the youth until they become successful.

In a recorded video message, Dr. Asrorun Ni'am Sholeh, Deputy Minister for Youth Development of Indonesia appreciated Bangladesh Government for hosting the first ever D-8 Youth Summit despite the pandemic. He remarked that the youth are the future of a country and agent of change. They are the agents of peace by spreading the messages of economic development and helping to achieve SDGs. They do so through their efforts coupled with the advancement of technology and the digital economy. As youth composes a quarter of Indonesia's total population, Indonesia sets youth entrepreneurship as one of the five priorities for the years 2020-2024. The country aims at empowering youth to be creative, innovative, competitive and enthusiastic. He noted with concern that business is not sustainable as they extract while damaging the environment. On the flip side, youth cares about sustainability by promoting innovative ways of doing things. He urged for the support for the youth. He advised the youth to be purpose-driven instead of profit-driven and flourish collaboration. He also expressed his desire to strengthen the partnership and cooperation of youth entrepreneurs of D8 countries.

In his statement, Masoud Soltanifar, Minister for Sport and Youth of Iran thanked everyone for participating in the summit. He stated that Iran is glorious and well known for its history, civilisation, heritage and beauty. Noting Iran's achievement despite the toughest sanctions over the years, the Minister related Iran's drastic breakthrough in engineering, nuclear technology, modern technology and other areas of development. He credited these progresses to the serious and sincere endeavours of Iranian people. He specifically marked Iranian youth's contribution during Covid-19 period as the young people made the country self-sufficient in producing masks and sanitizers. He also added that Iran's ultimate effort lies on

flourishing their young population to engage them in different areas. Iran witnesses and acknowledges their roles. He also expressed Iran's readiness to share best practices with other D8 countries. Terming D-8 group as a good scope to foster cooperation and connection, he proposed that 2022 be named as D8 Youth Creativity Year. He also urged everyone to resist any attempt to mislead the youth.

The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Malaysia congratulate Bangladesh for hosting the summit. She lauded the youth for their resilience. Despite challenges, the youth play an active role in fighting the pandemic and climate change. Malaysia has undertaken different initiatives for the youth so that they can realise their full potential. The Ministry of Youth and Sports has reached out to different stakeholders including government organisations and private companies for collecting mechanism and support. This cross-ministry approach helped optimize resources. She urged the youth to embrace digitalisation. She also updated the audience on different initiatives of Malaysian Government in order to prepare the youth for the fourth industrial revolution, automated technology and oil and gas sectors. She urged the youth to utilize the opportunity.

Muhammad Usman Dar, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Youth Affairs of Pakistan congratulated Bangladesh Government for hosting the summit. He highlighted Pakistan's measures to develop the youth. He mentioned 3Es—quality education, gainful employment, and meaningful engagement—to unleash the potential of Pakistani youth. He also apprised of several projects that help Pakistani youth get technical and vocational training and financial support. The Special Assistant to the Prime Minister proposed to establish a youth council of D-8 to explore mutual support. He also suggested that promotion of youth exchange programme in education, sports and climate change. Furthermore, he also proposed to develop a digital youth portal for D-8 members so that the youth of these countries can communicate and cooperate among themselves. He assured Pakistan's full support to achieve tangible results for the youth of the D-8 nations.

The Deputy Director-General of the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Turkey thanked the Bangladesh Government and the participants. He recalled that Dhaka was declared as the OIC Youth Capital-2020. Amid the Covid-19 ridden world, he stressed the need for supporting the young entrepreneurs and deepening cooperation among the D-8 Member States. Turkey reaches its youth population through scholarship, project, support programmes and aid programmes. It also carries out youth exchange programme. He also remarked that Turkey hosts Syrian refugees who are mostly children (40%). It provides supports for the young refugee guests for social cohesion. He emphasised on the need of entrepreneurship in order to shape their

future. He expressed satisfaction for improving relations with D8 partners and passion to serve the youth.

4. Keynote Presentation on ‘Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Transformation’

Md. Rashedur Rahman, an Associate Professor of Dhaka University presented the keynote on the summit’s theme: entrepreneurship for sustainable transformation. He discussed different factors like integration, interdependence, technology, fourth industrial revolution, empowerment and diversity, new business models, job skills, unpredictability & uncertainty, media freedom, values & culture, and youth & demographic dividends. He also referred to China, India and Indonesia who are emerging as the leading economies of the world by shifting the global trade and businesses. He also highlighted on the movement towards east in research and development (R&D) as the top two companies among the 50 recent biggest R&D investors are now Korean Samsung and Chinese Huawei respectively. Referring to the challenges, he mentioned inequality, environmental challenges, lack of tolerance and mutual respect, limited access to resources, cyber security, and protectionism.

He also spoke about the responses to tackle the challenges in the global, national, international and individual levels. The youth are the driving force and change agent. They need empathy, to be listened, resources to share, platform to share, linkage, equal opportunities across nations. He noted with concern that no D-8 country is among the top ten list of export and import. They also perform very poorly in patent indicators and other important global reports including global innovation index, ease of doing business index and global entrepreneurship index. He also urged to pay for the cities of the D-8 countries the global start up ecosystem report 2020 that assesses the cities. This will increase the investment attractiveness of the cities. He proposed the Ministry of Youth and Sports to include SMEs and Innovation Driven Enterprises (IDEs) in the main D-8 Summit. He urged the youth to work for purposes, and achieve the quality of resilience, openness, kindness, , and persist with study, learning and growth.

5. Breakout Session

More than 180 youth representatives from each of the D-8 countries participated in the summit. They split in six groups and engaged in in-depth discussion that centred round the theme of the summit. Each group came up with different ideas and proposals.

6. Presentation by Group Leaders

After the breakout session each group came up with different ideas and proposals. A brief note of the major recommendations is furnished below:

- National policy and regulations should be formulated in such a way that accommodates entrepreneurship as priority and be more inclusive in terms of reflection of the voices of the youth.
- Creating an 'Entrepreneurs Alliance' among the member countries to share best practices in the fields of youth innovation and commercialization process.
- Re-evaluating the export and import policies for SMEs in each country with a view to providing flexibility in tax rates and removing tariff and non-tariff barriers on products of youth.
- Ensuring women empowerment and equal rights has been and will always be the key factor in determining the fate of the economy of a nation. Thus, sustainable transformation through entrepreneurship can never be a success without empowering women and ensuring their equal access to resources.
- Improving education starting from vocational to university level with a focus on soft skills: entrepreneurship innovation, digital literacy and leadership skills.
- Creating a dedicated D-8 countries youth hub/networking/E-meeting platform to widen opportunity for sharing expertise and experiences.
- Adoption and introduction of common policy for ease of doing business for the young entrepreneurs and establishment of a common bank to ensure common and secured fund.

Key areas to focus to attain the above major goals as recommended by the youths are:

- Digital transformation: Pandemic has driven the world from offline to online. So youth need to be digitally connected. Digital innovation literacy and inclusion of digital education in curriculum.
- Education for sustainability: Both digital educations along with innovation are needed.
- Policy and regulation: To make the government policies inclusive enough, youth should be in the decision making table.
- Promoting women economic rights through inclusiveness and equal participation.
- Facilitating technological skill development, entrepreneur training, market contacts, availability of capital. Easy access for knowledge and positive environment for entrepreneurship.
- Creation of a D-8 youth hub/ common youth council.

- Help the young entrepreneur financially by exploring the possibility of creating a D-8 bank for youth, lower interest rate and less barrier to get funding and loans from banks and financial institutions.
- Focus on capital formation, backward and forward linkages, creating knowledge, diversifying products, organizing resources, development of new techniques.
- Address the barriers: lack of funds, labours, technical skills, market knowledge, legal constraints, patents, political stability, Covid-19 pandemic.
- Focus on education: Improve education for people, starting from vocational skills. Focus on soft skills like problems solving and communication skills.
- Revising export and import policies: to provide support for youth and ensure tax flexibility. Focus on boost for economic effort. Focus on banking mechanism that is youth friendly, collateral free.
- Culture and knowledge sharing programmes to ease adaptability.

7. Closing remarks

The 3-hour long summit ended with the closing remarks by Md. Shahriar Alam, MP, the State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh. He noted with gratitude the contribution of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to engage the youth to rebuild the country in 1972. The Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina is also following her father's legacy by empowering the youth of the country. He termed the youth summit as a platform to test different ideas and initiatives. He praised the breakout sessions and the presentations of the youth participants. He mentioned the process to learn, unlearn and relearn in order to set for the causes. He advised the youth to take home the whole summit's spirit. He inspired them to ignite their minds and rekindle their aspiration to pursue their goals for betterment. He also noted that this event will produce a draft action plan that will map out the powers of youth in achieving the SDGs. It highlights the digital economy and identify youth's role in these sectors. He sought to put youth together to leverage the spill-over benefits and synergise the efforts of D-8 Member States. He added that the D8 was initiated with a hope to achieve economic betterment of the citizens.

The State Minister noted that Bangladesh is at a glorious juncture at its national history and celebrating the golden jubilee of independence and the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation of Bangladesh. The organisation of this summit manifests Bangladesh's commitment to D8 Charter and to the friends of D-8 Member States, he added. He also congratulated the State Minister for Youth and Sports for organising this event. He concluded the youth summit by thanking all the ministers, dignitaries

of the Members States, D-8 Secretary-General and the youth participants and hoping that D-8 Youth Summit will continue from now onwards regularly.

List of the Participants (Ministers/Senior officials)

Bangladesh

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Minister of State
Ministry of Youth and Sports

Egypt

Mr. Abdel Nasser Mohamed Ali
Director General at the Central administration for Projects and Training
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Indonesia

DR. Asrorun Ni'am Sholeh, MA.
Deputy Minister for Youth Development
Ministry of Youth and Sport

Iran

His Excellency Mr. Masoud Soltanifar
Minister
Ministry of Sport and Youth

Malaysia

Ms. Nur Nazirah Md Joha
Undersecretary of International Relations division
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Pakistan

His Excellency Mr. Muhammad Usman Dar
Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on youth Affairs

Turkey

Inanç Özçakmak
Deputy General Director
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