

Bangladesh Development Forum 2003



Statement of Hon'ble Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia

**Dhaka
Saturday, 03 Jaishtha, 1410
17 May, 2003**

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I extend to you all a warm welcome to the Bangladesh Development Forum 2003. On behalf of my Government and on my own behalf, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all of you for supporting the development endeavours of Bangladesh since its inception.

As you may be aware, our Government inherited a difficult economic situation from the previous Government. We made concerted efforts to put the economy on the right track through effective implementation of reform programmes and pursuing prudent fiscal and financial policies. In line with government commitment, we have implemented various measures for improving governance, law and order and investment climate and accelerating economic growth and poverty reduction. The country's law and order situation has markedly improved after we came to power. We now possess a better investment-friendly climate. Many obstacles hindering the process of development are being removed and bureaucratic procedures streamlined. We have taken a number of important steps to improve the condition of children in difficulty with law. We have carried out reforms to ensure speedy justice. We have initiated significant police and jail reforms. We have introduced merit-based promotion for civil servants. A need based training policy has been put in place to strengthen their training. You will be happy to know that our government has decided to constitute an Independent Anti-Corruption Commission in order to ensure greater accountability of public functionaries. The Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs is presently working out the details in this regard.

We have achieved remarkable success in macro-economic stability over the past one and a half years. We have consolidated our gains in the social sectors and brought forth further improvements. For attaining macro-economic stability, a number of reform measures have been taken up in the key sectors of the economy. Areas of such reforms include fiscal and budgetary process, financial policies, and privatization of loss-making enterprises.

In this era of globalization and free market economy, the private sector has a crucial role to play. We are taking all possible measures to facilitate the development of a vibrant private sector. For enhancing foreign direct investment in the economy, we offer a highly attractive package of incentives.

The central development objective of our Government is to reduce poverty in keeping with the Millennium Development Goals. Our Constitution also enjoins us to create a just society, meet basic needs of the people and ensure the values of a free society to every citizen. Towards that end, we have prepared “a National Strategy for Economic Growth, Poverty Reduction and Social Development” which is the Interim-Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. The vision put forth in this Paper is substantial alleviation of poverty within the shortest possible time. Major policy initiatives critical to implementing our country’s poverty reduction agenda include maintenance of macro-economic stability, improving governance, investment in human development and ensuring social protection for the poor. I am confident that through implementing these initiatives, we shall be able to achieve pro-poor economic growth and also enhance human capabilities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Human Development will remain the top most priority agenda of our Government. Health, education and gender mainstreaming are our priority areas. We have already demonstrated our commitment to these sectors through concrete actions. The Government also continues to emphasize investment in physical infrastructure in order to support private sector growth. We recognize that civil society and NGOs have been playing a vital role in our development process. We would like to see more meaningful cooperation with them in future.

Distinguished Guests,

We have made much progress during the last nineteen months. However, we are not fully satisfied with our achievements. A number of development and governance problems are yet to be addressed. We have, therefore, to accomplish much more in the days ahead. Our Government sincerely expects to work in close cooperation with all of you in this regard. We acknowledge the continued support you extended to our development efforts over the past three decades. However, I would like to draw the attention of the Development Partners to their commitment in various international fora to support our present and future development efforts. I am confident that this forum will give us the opportunity to share our common concerns with you, clarify pertinent issues and strengthen our beneficial partnership. I look forward to a successful outcome of this

forum. I also assure you of our government's continued support and cooperation. With these words, I hereby declare the Bangladesh Development Forum 2003 open.

Thank you all.

Allah Hafez
Bangladesh Zindabad

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