

# Our Nation May Suffer But They Can Never Die

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Great victories have been won in Algeria, in Vietnam, in Bangladesh and in Guinea-Bissau. Such events prove that history is on the side of the people and that justice ultimately triumphs.

But injustice and oppression still persist in many parts of the world. Our Arab brethren are still fighting for the complete vacation of all illegal occupied territories and the legitimate national rights of the people of Palestine have yet to be restored. The process of decolonisation, though greatly advanced, has yet to reach its ultimate goal. This is particularly true in Africa where the heroic people of Zimbabwe and Namibia are still engaged in a grim struggle for freedom and national liberation. Apartheid, which this Assembly has repeatedly declared to be a crime against humanity, continues to outrage the conscience of man. While the legacy of injustice from the past has to be liquidated

the minimum conditions of a decent life.

The great economic upheavals which have recently shaken the entire world should generate a sense of urgency about building a just International Economic Order. The special session of this Assembly earlier this year took note of the grave implications of the present international economic situation. Speaking for a country which heads the list of those described as being 'most severely affected' by the current economic situation, I can only underline how grievous these effects are. Bangladesh, which was born on the ruins of a devastating war, has ever since liberation, been plagued by a series of natural disasters, the latest one being the unprecedented floods we have experienced this year. We are grateful to the United Nations, its agencies, and to the Secretary General for their active interest in helping Bangladesh to meet the situation.

President

severe reduction in even this current subsistence level of living.

People who are consuming less than the minimum considered necessary for mere survival by the world Health Organisation, now face starvation. The forecast for the future of the poorer countries is even more gloomy. Foodgrains, of which the developed industrial nations are the main exporters, are gradually going out of their reach as a result of steadily increasing price. Their efforts to attain self-sufficiency in food production are also being severely affected because of rising cost and growing scarcity of vital agricultural inputs. Side by side, as a result of global inflation which has not only increased manifold the cost of development project but has also adversely reduced their ability to mobilise their own resources, countries already faced with grinding poverty and massive unemployment are threatened

self and his family.

We are full conscious that the current economic crisis can be dealt with only in an environment of peace, international amity and understanding. In this context, urgent measures to control the present arms race assumes special importance not only for the creation of such an environment but also to release massive resources currently being wasted on armaments, for the common good of mankind.

Bangladesh, from its very inception has adopted a non-aligned foreign policy based on the principles of peaceful co-existence and friendship towards all. Our total commitment to peace is born of the realization that only an environment of peace would enable us to enjoy the fruits of our hard won national independence and to mobilise and concentrate all our energies and resources in combating the scourges of poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy and unemployment.

We, therefore, welcome every effort at advancing the process of detente, relaxation of tension, limitation of armaments and the promotion of peaceful co-existence in every part of the world whether it is in Asia, Africa, Europe or in Latin America in pursuance of this policy we have consistently supported the concept of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean area which has received the powerful endorsement of this Assembly. We have also supported the concept of South East Asia as a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality.

We believe that the nations of the emerging world assembled in the non-aligned conference provide powerful support to the cause of peace. They have reaffirmed the common determination of the overwhelming majority of the people or the world to preserve national independence and to promote peace and justice.

Peace is an imperative for the survival of mankind. It represents the deepest aspirations of men and women throughout the world. Peace, to endure, must however be based upon justice.

Consistent with our own, total commitment to peace, we have striven to promote the process of reconciliation in our own subcontinent. It was our firm belief that the emergence of Bangladesh would materially contribute towards creating a structure of peace and stability in our subcontinent and that the confrontation and strife of the past could be replaced by relations of friendship and cooperation for the welfare of the our peoples. We have not only developed good neighborly relations with our immediate neighbors India, Burma and Nepal, but have striven to turn away from the past and open a new chapter of relations with Pakistan. We, have spared no effort toward liquidating the legacies of the past and made our ultimate contribution by granting Clemens even to those 195 prisoners of war against whom there was overwhelming evidence of having committed grave crimes including crimes against humanity. This was our investment towards opening a new chapter, and towards building a future of peace and stability in our tormented subcontinent. In doing this we insisted on no preconditions nor did we seek to strike any bargain for we were influenced only by the vision of a better future for all our peoples. We looked forward to the resolution of these outstanding problems in a spirit of fair play and mutual accommodation.

The plight of the 63,000 Pakistani families, who have reaffirmed their allegiance to Pakistan and have registered themselves with the International Committee of the Red Cross for repatriation to their country, remains a pressing humanitarian problem. Only is their right to be



Bangabandhu meets UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing the 51st session of the UN General Assembly on 24 October 1996

we are faced with the challenges of the future. Today the nations of the world are faced with critical choices upon the wisdom of which depend whether we will move towards a world haunted by fear of total destruction, threatened by nuclear war faced with the aggravation of human suffering on a horrendous scale, marked by mass starvation, unemployment and the wretchedness of deepening poverty or whether we can look forward to a world where human creativity and the great achievements of our age in science and technology will be able to shape a better future free from the threat of nuclear war and based upon a sharing of technology and resources on a global scale so that men everywhere can begin to enjoy

Boumediene and Foreign Minister Bouteflika of Algeria have appealed to the non-aligned group of countries to come forward to help Bangladesh, friendly countries and humanitarian organisations all over the world have been responding positively. These natural calamities have not only impeded Bangladesh's march towards economic progress, but have also left the country in a state of near famine condition. At the same time global inflation has meant for a country such as ours a balance of payments gap in the order of hundreds of millions of dollars. Translated in terms of human suffering, this means that people with a meagre annual per capita income of less than one hundred dollars are now faced with the prospect of a

with the dire possibilities of cut-backs in their modest development plans envisaging growth rates of five to six per cent per annum.

Unless the nations of the world can concert their action to meet this situation, human misery will be aggravated on a scale unknown in history. Indeed there would be no recorded parallel of such human misery having to be endured by so many side by side with such unprecedented levels of affluence and property enjoyed by so few. Only a regeneration of the feeling of human solidarity and brotherhood and acknowledgement of interdependence can bring about a rational solution and the urgent action needed to avoid this catastrophe.

No greater challenge has been faced by the United Nations than that of marshalling the forces of reason to bring about a just international economic order. This order must not only ensure sovereignty of each state over its natural resources but should also seek to establish a framework of international cooperation based upon recognition of the overriding common interest of the countries of the world in a stable and just economic system. This is the moment when we must reaffirm in unequivocal terms that there is an international responsibility to ensure that everyone everywhere should enjoy the economic social and cultural right indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality as guaranteed to him by the universal declaration of human rights. This responsibility, according to the universal declaration should extend to ensuring to everyone the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of him

repatriated to the country to which they retain allegiance, based on the strongest foundation of law and international agreement, but the dictates of humanity's call for an urgent solution of their problem.

The just division of the assets of former Pakistan is the other problem which awaits urgent solution. Bangladesh on its part was, and remains ready to move forward towards reconciliation. We expect that in the overriding interest of the welfare of the peoples of the subcontinent, Pakistan will reciprocate by coming forward to resolve these outstanding problems in a spirit of fairplay and mutual accommodation so that the process of normalisation can be carried to a successful conclusion.

Bangladesh will continue to strive for good neighborly relations with all its neighbors based on the principles of peaceful co-existence, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and non interference in each other's internal affairs. We will continue to support every move which seeks to promote

peace in our region and in the world.

In a world that is marked by strife and human misery, the United Nations remains the focus of man's hope for the future. Despite many difficulties and obstacles placed in its way, the UN, during more than a quarter century of its existence, has significantly contributed towards human progress in the political, economic, social and cultural fields. There are few countries in the world that have a better relation than Bangladesh of the concrete achievements and the potential for good of this organization. It was under the inspired leadership of Dr. Kurt Waldheim and his able and dedicated colleagues that the United Nations mounted a major relief and reconstruction programme in our country the heal the wounds of war, to restore the productive capacity of our war ravaged economy and to rehabilitate millions of returning refugees from India who had to take shelter there during our struggle for liberation.

To the secretary-general, members of his staff and the various humanitarian agencies

who have contributed to the success of this gantic operation I would like to offer the sincere expression of gratitude of the Government and of the people of Bangladesh. We are confident that the same constructive leadership will be forthcoming from the United Nations in the solution of the remaining humanitarian problem in the subcontinent.

As I have mentioned earlier we are grateful to the United Nations for the efforts in mobilising assistance in aid of the victims of current catastrophic floods in Bangladesh. As a country which has repeatedly been exposed to the ravages of natural calamities, Bangladesh has a special stake in the creation of an institutional arrangement by which the international community can move effectively to meet and prevent such calamities. Indeed a beginning, though modest, has already been made in this respect by the establishment of the office of United Nations disaster relief coordinator. However in order that it can effectively play the role as signed to it. There is an imperative need to strengthen the organization.

The members of the United Nations have a special responsibility to concert their efforts for the achievement of this objective.

Mr. President I would like to conclude by reaffirming my faith in the indomitable spirit of man in the capacity of the people to achieve the impossible and to overcome insurmountable odds. This is the faith which sustains nations like us which sustains nations like us which have emerged through struggle and sacrifice. Our nations may suffer but they can never die. In facing the challenge of survival, the determination of the people is an ultimate strength. Our goal is self-reliance, our chosen path is the united and collective efforts of our people, International cooperation and the sharing of resources and technology could no doubt make our task less onerous and reduce the cost in human suffering. But for us in the emerging world, ultimately we must have faith in ourselves in our capacity through the united and concerted, efforts of our peoples to fulfill our destiny and to build for ourselves a better future.

government has very recently approved at the Cabinet establishment of a National Human Rights Commission which has been warmly welcomed in the Commission this year. In July 1998 at the Rome Diplomatic Conference, Bangladesh voted in favour of adopting the statute of an International Criminal Court to try and prosecute international criminals committing crimes of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and aggression. Bangladesh was the only country from South Asia to have voted in favour of the court.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's receiving the Felix Houphouet-Boigny Peace Prize in April 1999 in recognition of her commitment to peace and dialogue and efforts to end a long standing conflict in eastern part of Bangladesh, was an accolade of the highest order which has deeply contributed in enhancing the image of the country. This was a recognition of Bangladesh's commitment to the world for the cause of peace and the culture of dialogue and negotiation. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's participation at the bicentennial ceremony of the Hague Peace Conference made a substantial impact on world leaders of her unwavering commitment to peace and total devotion to the cause of development. As the new millennium approaches, Bangladesh will continue to work with the international community to strengthen the United Nations and contribute in its noble mission of ensuring a world free of conflict, poverty and deprivation.

## BANGLADESH : 25 YEARS IN THE UN

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### BANGLADESH EMERGES A STAR OF MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY

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contributed to the United Nations activities by coordinating major groups of countries as the Chairman of the Group of 77 in 1982-83 and as the Coordinator of the 48 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) since 1980, voicing their collective concern in the areas of economic and social development. During its Chairmanship, the G-77 permanent support office was established at the United Nations Headquarters and now serves as the main backup for various G-77 participation at the global forums. Formations of the group "Friends of Microcredit at the U.N." at Bangladesh's initiative also earned all round friendship for us. The upcoming Chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement for 2001 to 2004 is a remarkable recognition of our leadership.

8. The multilateral role of Bangladesh at the United Nations has become mature and particularly visible in recent years. It has taken firm but constructive and proactive position on issues relating to peacekeeping, development, governance, human rights, social development, situation of women, and children and budgetary and financial matters at the UN.

9. In the Administrative and Budgetary fields, and in the United Nations reform efforts of the Secretary-General, Bangladesh had been a lead player particularly through its Chairmanship of the Fifth Committee of the session in which reform proposals were discussed and approved for the first time in 1997. The first United Nations reform budget was approved by consensus during Bangladesh chairmanship. The most complicated issue of the triennial scale of assessment was approved also in the same session.

10. Bangladesh's prolonged and constructive engagement in restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in economic, social and related fields has earned praise and recognition from the entire UN membership. Bangladesh Permanent Representative was entrusted with this sensitive task,

in his capacity as a Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The sixteen-month long effort in the 1997-98 resulted in the successful reform of as many as thirty subsidiary bodies of the ECOSOC for the first time in the UN history and has been welcomed by all. The handling of this complex issue earned the appreciation of all countries irrespective of their views and preferences.

11. One of the most difficult, and yet most successful achievements associated with the efforts of Bangladesh hinged around its efforts in the coordinated and integrated follow-up process of the outcome of major UN conferences of the decade of 1990s. The preparation for this year's special session on population and development on the review of the Cairo Conference outcome proceeded through an intensely complex negotiating process on issues which were charged with political and culturally sensitive elements. Bangladesh's handling of these delicate issues as the Chairman of the preparatory process and the successful outcome of the Special Session of the UN General Assembly will be a model for the similar upcoming future events, such as, review of the Copenhagen and Beijing Conferences on social development and women.

12. One of the major functions of our involvement in the UN relates to the work concerning Bangladesh's contribution of troops and equipment to various UN peacekeeping operations around the world. Bangladesh enjoys an eminent stature as the second largest troop contributing country.

13. In October 1996, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina lunched in New York our candidature for the Security Council membership for the term 2000-2001. As a major endeavour, a well-organized campaign for Bangladesh's election to the Security Council has been undertaken. Upon election, the next two years will open new vista for Bangladesh's involvement in the United Nations.

empowerment around the world. Bangladesh has subsequently taken the similar leadership role in the adoption by the UNGA, for the first time, by consensus a substantive, independent and forward-looking resulting entitled "Role of microcredit in the eradication of Poverty" in 1997. In 1998 in ECOSOC and also in the 53rd UNGA Bangladesh introduced the UN Proclamation of the year of the year 2005 as the International Year of Micro-credit. Bangladesh has been playing the role of coordinator of the 48 Least Develop Countries and has initiated major activities on their behalf. Bangladesh also exercises a leadership profile in the 133- Member Group of 77 and China. Bangladesh will host the 114 member NAM Summit in 2001 followed by Chairmanship of the Movement, from 2001 to 2004. These are the most important and high profile roles that many developing country can aspire to play in the United Nations.

Bangladesh is constitutionally committed to maintaining international peace and security. Bangladesh has been continuing to rank among the top three largest troops contributing countries to UN Peace Keeping Operations with participation in 28 out of 47 Peace Keeping Missions. Bangladesh first sent its troops to the UNIMOG Mission in Iraq-Iran in 1988. Since then, it has successfully carried out its duties in various Missions like UNTAG in Namibia, ONUMOZ in Mozambique, UNTAC in

Cambodia, UNOSOM in Somalia, UNOMIL in Liberia, UNAVEM in Angola, UNIKUM in Kuwait, UNOMIG in Georgia and so on. The professional competence, commendable performance and positive image of the Bangladesh peace-keepers have already been well established and recognized in the international community. The UN Secretary General has personally sent a letter of appreciation to the government of Bangladesh for the dedication and professionalism shown by the Bangladesh troops in various UNPKOs particularly in UNOMIL. Recently, Secretary-General of UN has appointed Brigadier Rejaul Haider of Bangladesh as Chief Military Liaison Officer of UN Mission in East Timor. Our commitment to international peace has been further vindicated by the participation of Bangladesh civilian police officers in the UNIMK operations in Kosovo and UNAMET in East Timor.

In keeping with her constitutional commitment to complete and general disarmament Bangladesh became a State party to the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NNPT) in 1972. This has further been reaffirmed after Bangladesh's signing the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) on 24 October 1996. Bangladesh ratified the Convention on Bacteriological and Toxin Weapons (BTWC) in 1984. In April 1997 Bangladesh has ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention and is playing a very active role at the Organisation

for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in the Hague as a Member of the 41 member Executive Council of the OPCW. In addition to these, on 07 May 1998 Bangladesh was the first South Asian Country to have signed the Convention on the prohibition on use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of Anti-personnel Landmines. Signing the APMT by Bangladesh has been widely lauded by the international community as a reiteration of her commitment to ridding this world of this inhumane weapon which has maimed or killed millions of people around the world.

Bangladesh have earlier signed/ratified at least 15 major international human rights Convention. The Present Government in July 1998 approved signed/acceded to six major international human rights instruments on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the UDHR. Besides, Bangladesh has also received a very positive projection for pushing through issues regarding Traffic in Women and Girls, integration the rights women throughout the United Nations System, the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the rights and dignity of the migrant workers, rights of minorities, a proposed Convention on the right to development etc. As member of the Commission of Human Rights (CHR) in Geneva, the Bangladesh delegation has played a positive and constructive role in upholding respect for human rights in its totality including the right to development. Bangladesh

promoting global peace and stability. Bangladesh's commitment in the United Nations and to the cause of peace has been reaffirmed under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Her initiatives in promoting peace, development and democracy has been widely acclaimed the world over. In recognition to her contributions to peace and human rights, the Prime Minister was awarded the prestigious Felix Houphouet-Boigny Peace Prize by the UNESCO. As an active member of Conference on Disarmament, we have advanced the cause of disarmament and peace by joining all international efforts towards complete and general disarmament. Bangladesh is a party to the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT), The Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT), the Convention on Bacteriological and Toxic Weapons (BTWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and a signatory to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Anti-Personnel Mine Treaty (APMT). We have served in important bodies in the United Nations including the Security Council and the Commission of Human Rights. We firmly believe that disarmament, development, democracy, human rights and peace are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The present Government's decision to host the summit Meeting of the 114 nation Non Aligned Movement in 2001 will provide Bangladesh with the opportunity to take the leadership on behalf of the developing world to further the cause of peace and address developmental issues.

I am confident that our long standing relation and cooperation with the United Nations will continue to grow in strength in the future. As the new millennium approaches, we renew the vow of our commitment to the United Nations Charter and to work together with the international community for establishing lasting peace.

Long live Bangladesh-United Nations cooperation.  
Long Live Bangabandhu, Long Live Bangladesh.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina met the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan during the OIC Summit held in Teheran on 11 December 1997

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### Message Samad Azad

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promoting global peace and stability. Bangladesh's commitment in the United Nations and to the cause of peace has been reaffirmed under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Her initiatives in promoting peace, development and democracy has been widely acclaimed the world over. In recognition to her contributions to peace and human rights, the Prime Minister was awarded the prestigious Felix Houphouet-Boigny Peace Prize by the UNESCO. As an active member of Conference on Disarmament, we have advanced the cause of disarmament and peace by joining all international efforts towards complete and general disarmament. Bangladesh is a party to the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT), The Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT), the Convention on Bacteriological and Toxic Weapons (BTWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and a signatory to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Anti-Personnel Mine Treaty (APMT). We have served in important bodies in the United Nations including the Security Council and the Commission of Human Rights. We firmly believe that disarmament, development, democracy, human rights and peace are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The present Government's decision to host the summit Meeting of the 114 nation Non Aligned Movement in 2001 will provide Bangladesh with the opportunity to take the leadership on behalf of the developing world to further the cause of peace and address developmental issues.

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*Abdus Samad Azad*  
(Abdus Samad Azad)  
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