



# Asia-Pacific Business Forum

## Regional Integration to Achieve Sustainable Development

8-9 February 2017 | Dhaka, Bangladesh



**Regional Cooperation towards Achieving Sustainable Development**

**Introduction**

The global community has entered a new global era of sustainable development in 2015 with the adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The 193-Member United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the Sustainable Development Summit held in New York on 25-27 September 2015. The new Agenda calls for countries to begin efforts to achieve 17 SDGs with 169 targets over the next 15 years. The Agenda addresses the three dimensions of sustainable development: namely social, economic and environmental, as well as important aspects related to peace, justice and effective institutions. Immediate past UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said "SDGs is a roadmap to ending global poverty, building a life of dignity for all and leaving no one behind. It is also a clarion call to work in partnership and intensify efforts to share prosperity, empower people's livelihoods, ensure peace and heal our planet for the benefit of this and future generations".

The new agenda is critical to Asia and the Pacific as it is for the entire global community. Home to more than half of the world's population and as much extreme poverty, the region generates nearly 40% of global gross domestic product (GDP) and contributes 60% to global growth. With the rising importance of the Asia Region in global sustainable development and climate change, it is essential to establish a regional framework for achieving the 2030 agenda and addressing the challenges. In fact, in the 'Means of Implementation and the Global Partnership' section of the 2030 Agenda, focused support to regional organizations in order to sustain achievements and address ongoing challenges and promotion of regional economic integration and interconnectivity, are mentioned (UN, 2015).

**Current Global Socio-Economic Scenario**

The SDGs have been build on the eight anti-poverty targets of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which the world committed to achieve by 2015. Although significant achievements have been made on many of the MDG targets worldwide, progress has been uneven across regions and countries, leaving significant gaps. Millions of people are being left behind, especially the poorest and those disadvantaged because of their sex, age, disability, ethnicity or geographic location. So, SDGs have set target to reach the most vulnerable.

The latest estimate shows that the poverty rate in the developing regions has plummeted, from 47 per cent in 1990 to 14 per cent in 2015, a drop of more than two thirds and almost half in the proportion of undernourished people in the developing regions. The number of people living in extreme poverty has also declined by more than half during the same period. The literacy rate among youth aged 15 to 24 has increased globally from 83 per cent to 91 per cent and the inequality gap between women and men has narrowed.

**Message**

It gives me immense pleasure to know that under the patronage of the Ministry of Commerce, Government of Bangladesh, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Bangladesh and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) are jointly organizing the Asia Pacific Business Forum (APBF) 2017 in Dhaka. The theme of the APBF is "Regional Integration to Achieve Sustainable Development" as envisaged by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The importance of Asia-Pacific Region is enormous considering its socio-economic and geopolitical location. This region also covers a large part of the world with diverse characteristics. So it is needless to say that the role of UNESCAP is very crucial for attaining sustainable development and making this region a great hub of development. I truly appreciate UNESCAP for introducing this innovative forum that promotes regional integration, mutual efforts and contributes in constructing and sustaining joint economic growth and social equity.

It is heartening to note that over the past few years Bangladesh has attained continued socio-economic growth despite world slowdown. It has been possible because of government's appropriate policy and concerted efforts of business and social sector that have come forward to work closely together. I am confident that ICC along with other trade bodies from home and abroad would render their valuable contributions for making our economy more viable and strong.

I hope, APBF will be effective in creating scope for the business sector on the economic front, strategies to come up with better solutions of development issues and reminding regional leaders about their commitments towards the world and mankind.

I welcome the participants from home and abroad and wish them a very pleasant stay in Dhaka, the capital and heritage city of Bangladesh. I also extend my sincere thanks and appreciations to the organizers for holding such an important event in Bangladesh.

I wish the Asia Pacific Business Forum 2017 in Dhaka a grand success.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.

*Md. Abdul Hamid*  
Md. Abdul Hamid  
President  
People's Republic of Bangladesh



**Abul Maal A. Muhith, MP**  
Minister  
Ministry of Finance  
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

**Message**

It gives me immense pleasure to send this message of auspicious occasion of the inauguration of the "International Conference on Asia-Pacific Business Forum, Regional integration to achieve Sustainable Development", organized by Bangladesh's National Committee of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Bangladesh on 8-9 February 2017.

The Asia-Pacific Region's flourishing economic exemplify how Trade and Investment, the building blocks of regional integration and globalization can drive growth and generate resources for reducing poverty. Trade & Investment should continue to grow as new Technologies and lower barriers facilitate more efficient transactions. But less Developed countries in particular find it challenging to participate in the process. That highlights the need to identify appropriate policies and institutions mechanisms will enable them to benefit from greater market access.

United Nations ESCAP should adapt to development activities in the some areas may be mentioned here that Trade arrangements, trade policy, regional dialogues and Training, Enterprise development, Building business networks, Trade facilitation, Trade and investment information, reducing poverties. I hope these activities may help to less developing countries of Asia-Pacific Region.

Organizing an event of this magnitude is not an easy task. It requires close involvement and dedicated efforts and cooperation of all stakeholders to make it reality. I am confident all participants of the conference will find it useful and rewarding.

I wish to commend the Bangladesh ICC for its indefatigable efforts to organize this important event and take this opportunities to extend my best wishes to the Bangladesh ICC for a successful outcome of the conference.

*Abul Maal A. Muhith*  
Abul Maal A. Muhith, M.P.



**Tofail Ahmed, MP**  
Minister  
Ministry of Commerce  
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

**Message**

I am delighted to know that ICC Bangladesh in collaboration with UNESCAP is going to organize a significant International Conference named as: Asia Pacific Business Forum (APBF) 2017 on Regional Integration to Achieve Sustainable Development.

Since APBF's launching in 2004, this platform has always reminded us about the role of business in shaping a country's future and helped in not just setting up policies that have a positive impact on people's lives but also in implementing them. I am sure this year there will be no difference.

There is a growing understanding - especially by business leaders and investors- that it is not enough for companies to concern themselves only with short-term profits because natural disasters, social unrest or economic disparity can damage long-term prosperity. The business that understand this challenge and take action will be a step ahead.

The adoption of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the world leaders in September 2015 is considered as an historic UN initiative. Over the next fifteen years, with these new goals that universally apply to all countries will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

It is clear that the SDGs not only identify where we have to be in 2030 to create a sustainable world, they also outline new markets and opportunities for companies all over the world. To succeed, we must turn the global goals into local business, as well as regional economic integration.

We in Bangladesh have been able to achieve most of the MDGs under the dynamic leadership of our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, MP. I am very much confident that the strategies adopted by her Government, Bangladesh will again become the leader in achieving SDGs by the emerging economies.

I praise the initiative of ICC Bangladesh in bringing distinguished policy makers, prominent business leaders, economists, researchers and investors together through this event and I hope their positive opinion and suggestion will make a difference in achieving the global goals.

I wish APBF 2017 to be a splendid success.

Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu.

*Tofail Ahmed*  
Tofail Ahmed, M.P.



**Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP**  
Minister  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

**Message**

I am happy to know that the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), Bangladesh is going to organize the 'Asia Pacific Business Forum (APBF) 2017' in Dhaka on 8-9 February 2017 with the support and collaboration of the Ministry of Commerce, Bangladesh and the United Nations Economic & Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). The theme of this year's forum "Regional Integration to Achieve Sustainable Development" is very timely, particularly in the context of ensuring inclusive growth and reducing inequalities within and among the countries to achieve sustainable development.

From our experiences in European Union and the ASEAN, It has been proven that regional integration has its merit and is key to securing overall peace and stability and promoting sustained social development and economic prosperity of any region. The historic adoption of the 'Agenda 2030' has added newer dimensions to the development aspirations of the nations across the world. No single country is able to accomplish the goals of sustainable development alone. Enhanced regional integration in terms of cross border trade and investment, infrastructural development, connectivity, energy cooperation and people-to-people contact contributes immensely towards achieving inclusive growth, poverty alleviation and reducing disparity among the people. This calls for effective, concrete and cohesive policies among the countries of the region.

Bangladesh under the visionary leadership of Bangabandhu's daughter Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been pursuing a prudent policy which encourages more regional interdependence in harnessing the complementarities of the member countries through mutual understanding and cooperation. Bangladesh has been acting as a bridge between the South and South East Asian countries and in that it has been active member in BIMSTEC, BBIN and BCIM-EC initiatives.

I firmly believe this forum will provide the right platform to encourage discussion among the member countries, international organizations, business leaders and experts - from home and abroad - and come up with constructive and pragmatic ideas and suggestions to achieve its objectives.

I wish this conference a great success.

Joy Bangla! Joy Bangabandhu!

*Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali*  
Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, M.P.



**Regional Cooperation towards Achieving Sustainable Development**

**Introduction**

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**Current Global Socio-Economic Scenario**

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**Message**

I am happy to know that the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Bangladesh and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) are going to organize the Asia-Pacific Business Forum 2017 on 8-9 February in Dhaka.

The platform, I hope, will provide a unique opportunity to bring together the stakeholders from government, academia, the international community, civil society and the private sector. Thus, it will create an environment for knowledge sharing and engaging in technical level discussions on different aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The platform will also provide feedback on the support required from UNESCAP and other development partners.

The forum's main agenda of this year is the role of business sector in implementing SDGs in priority areas such as cross border infrastructure, transport, energy and ICT, regional connectivity and cooperation.

We must not forget that our success in achieving the goals of MDGs was a collective effort. If we want to set an example on implementing SDGs, we will need every sector to come forward, especially the business sector, as its role directly influences the socio-economic development of the world.

I believe that collective work and regional cooperation can play a vital role for achieving the UN 2030 SDGs, not only for the Asia-Pacific Region but also for the whole world.

I wish the Asia-Pacific Business Forum 2017 a grand success.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu

May Bangladesh Live Forever.

*Sheikh Hasina*  
Sheikh Hasina  
Prime Minister  
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh



**Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono**  
Former President  
Republic of Indonesia

**Message**

Excency,

First of all, I would like to express my profound thanks to you for our fruitful meeting in Bali on 29 January 2016. I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to you and International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Bangladesh for the kind invitation to me to deliver a keynote speech at UNESCAP Asia-Pacific Business Forum 2017, which will be held on 8-9 February 2017 in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The theme of the 2017 Forum, which is "Regional Integration to Achieve Sustainable Development", is very timely and relevant. I must admit that the Forum will be very critical as we witness together that our world is, indeed, at risk of many global challenges. Therefore, I am glad to see that the People's Republic of Bangladesh has stepped up in an effort to indicate the importance of Sustainable Development in the world's progress.

Unfortunately, I regret to inform you that I will not be able to participate in the forum due to previously planned schedule which I have agreed to participate beforehand. However, without my presence, I am very sure that this year's UNESCAP Asia-Pacific Business Forum will produce another excellent outcomes and reliable solutions to address our common challenges.

Once again, I thank you for offering me this opportunity and may your endeavors be successful.

Yours sincerely,

*Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono*  
Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono  
Former President  
Republic of Indonesia

Mr. Mahbubur Rahman  
President  
International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Bangladesh



**Rishad Bathiudeen, M.P.**  
Minister of Industry and Commerce of Sri Lanka

**Message**

It is with immense pleasure that I send this message of Greetings for the important event, Asia-Pacific Business Forum (APBF) 2017, "Regional Integration to Achieve Sustainable Development" from 8th to 9th February 2017 in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

It is highly commendable for organizing this event at a time when the global economy is showing the signs of recovery especially the Asia-Pacific region. Although the overall outlook for Asia-Pacific shows a fairly moderate rate, it is vital for the Asia-Pacific economies which strongly depends on exports, to sustain this growth momentum in long run, while facing future challenges and risks and consolidating its position in the global economy with more regional cooperation and structural policy reforms.

I believe this forum provides an ideal opportunity for the Asian-Pacific business leaders, legislators, senior government officials, policy makers, academia and other professional bodies in the region to share their views, thinking and experience for way forward in formulating regional and global strategies, to ensure that Asia-Pacific region continue to be a dynamic force driving the global recovery and take the lead role in sustaining the economic growth and remain resilient to global risks.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate the ICC - Bangladesh, Ministry of Commerce, Government of Bangladesh and the UNESCAP for organizing this Forum and inviting me to witness the deliberations to reach a constructive outcome.

I wish this Business Forum a great resounding success!!!

*Rishad Bathiudeen*  
Rishad Bathiudeen, M.P.