

Bangladesh Statement by
Architect Yeafesh Osman, State Minister, Ministry of Science
and Information & Communication Technology, Government of the
People's Republic of Bangladesh at IAEA Ministerial Conference
on Nuclear Safety 20 - 24 June 2011, Vienna, Austria

Mr. President, (Mr. Antonio Guerreiro)

Mr. Director General, (Mr. Yukiya Amano)

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

At first Mr. President I would like to extend our heartiest congratulations on your election as the President of the Conference. I also take this opportunity to congratulate all other elected officials for their election. I assure you of our fullest support and cooperation.

Mr. President,

On behalf of our Government and my Delegation, I extend our heartiest thanks and appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Yukiya Amano, Director General of IAEA for his timely initiative in organizing this Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety after the grave crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in Japan. I also take this opportunity to express thanks to him for his outstanding effort to assist and support Japan to combat the calamity and for sharing regular updated information with the Member States on its status.

Mr. President,

We believe that this Conference is very timely and will provide an opportunity to the Member States to have an assessment of the extent of Fukushima accident. This event will help dispel confusions emerged on the future of nuclear energy and formulate a strategy to strengthen global nuclear safety regime, and advise the Member States on how to further strengthen effectively the response plan for future nuclear accidents and emergencies.

Mr. President,

The people of Bangladesh were deeply distressed by the catastrophic impact of the devastating earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan on 11 March 2011. On behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, I wish to express our deepest condolences and sympathies to the people of Japan. We also wish to express our solidarity and support to the Government and people of Japan and to all other international organizations that are engaged in the massive works of rehabilitation, relief and rebuilding. The people of Japan are known for their resilience and strength to overcome crisis repeatedly in their history and I firmly believe that this time it will not be any exception either. In this critical juncture, Bangladesh will stand by the Government and people of Japan in all their efforts to brave this calamity.

Excellencies,

We began this millennium with a resolve to eradicate poverty and hunger, to ensure food and energy security, to achieve environmental sustainability and to fight cancer and other killer diseases. Our efforts are gaining momentum every day.

Unfortunately, Bangladesh along with other Least Developed Countries (LDCs) is still characterized by vulnerable economy. Nuclear technology could come as an answer to overcome the economic vulnerabilities of LDCs in specific areas of energy, health, agriculture and food security.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the independence, Bangladesh has made significant progress towards achievements in the Socio- economic sectors. However, we are still short of the true growth potential due to inadequate infrastructure and lack of energy sources. The present Government under the leadership of our Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has declared "Vision 2021-Digital Bangladesh" aiming to transform Bangladesh into a knowledge-based and technology driven digitized middle income country by 2021. Our focus is on food and energy security, adaptation and mitigation of climate change, and public health with particular attention to diseases like cancer. The use of science and technology and an expanded role of nuclear technology in various sectors are identified as the tools for meeting the goals of Vision 2021. Already, Nuclear technology is helping us with diagnosis and treatment of killer diseases and also with the development of saline resistant high-yielding varieties of paddy and various other agricultural applications thus ensuring both health and food security of our people.

Mr. President,

The ongoing global energy crisis is already having a telling effect on the development endeavors of developed and developing nations, especially in countries that have scarcity of indigenous energy resources and are rapidly depleting their resources.

With the rapid changes in the global conditions of fossil fuel energy sources, issues of global warming due to green-house gas emissions from energy sector, there is a notable agreement on renewable and non-carbon energy. In this context, nuclear power programme (NPP) assumes significance.

Bangladesh has limited indigenous energy resources. Energy crisis is a national issue and has been the major impediment to enhancing productive capacity. The present government has outlined targets and milestones for enhancing power generation. In order to ensure access to quality electricity for all, Bangladesh is evolving an energy-mix diversification, where nuclear energy is assumed as one of the choices to meet the growing energy needs. Our government is building Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant (RNPP) in Bangladesh to meet the rising demand of electricity. Accordingly, the Government is giving top priority to the issues of radiological protection, nuclear safety and security and wishes to build nuclear reactors with advanced inherent safety features, four safety barriers, multi-redundant safety trains, and passive engineering safety systems, complimented with the latest safety codes for severe accident prevention and capable of tolerating any severe man-made or natural events namely seismic events, tsunami, flooding and other natural events. We have confidence in IAEA and in its guidelines and other safety measures which our concerned agency committed to comply with. We, therefore call upon the IAEA, the relevant international mechanisms, the vendors and vendor countries to support and cooperate in this regard.

Mr. President,

Risks will always exist in the nuclear field as also for other technologies. Just one accident is not an attestation of nuclear energy being unreliable and hazardous. However, to address the question of safety and security which has always been considered paramount and to allay the concerns of member states, immediate but proactive measures are warranted. Bangladesh recognizes the pivotal role of IAEA in coordinating international efforts to strengthen global nuclear safety and we expect an increased international and regional cooperation to ensure the highest and most vigorous level of nuclear safety based on IAEA's safety requirements. We hope that the IAEA will make a realistic assessment of the Fukushima nuclear plant accident, identify the causes and mention the lessons learned and formulate a detailed action plan for future implementation by the Member States as guidelines.

The Fukushima accident undoubtedly once again reiterates the need for a strengthened system of national, regional and international emergency preparedness and response as well as for strengthened cooperation among national regulatory authorities and relevant national and international organizations. This exchange of information may be given an institutional structure under IAEA.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You all would agree that this is the time we seriously consider to think of creating any contingency or emergency mechanism in a global scale like any emergency crisis management centre under IAEA for the developing countries especially for the LDCs to deal with post-crisis rehabilitation efforts.

And, I believe, this is a shared responsibility and this Conference will actively consider this proposal.

Mr. President,

We strongly believe that all member States would make and use their nuclear programs in an absolutely transparent manner and for peaceful purposes. And, they should ensure safety, security and cooperation among the States. In Bangladesh we are fully committed to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Our nuclear energy program is very transparent. Bangladesh has signed all the relevant international treaties, agreements and protocol prevailing in the nuclear non-proliferation and verification regime such as, NPT, Safeguards Agreements, Additional Protocol, CTBT, Safety Convention, Convention on Early Notification, etc.

Mr. President,

To conclude, I wish the success of this Conference and hope that its outcome would greatly facilitate the shaping of the future programs of the Agency and the Member States in such a way that the people may be the ultimate beneficiary of the peaceful use of nuclear technology. Nuclear technology has faithfully served the humanity for all these ages and it will continue to do so in the days to come as a clean and secured source of energy for all. We wish that the Agency will do its utmost within its role and mandate as it has done in case of Fukushima incident. This Conference will be marked as yet another important platform to ensure not only nuclear safety but also to assure development for the greater benefit of mankind.

I thank all of you for your kind attention.