

**Statement of Bangladesh Delegation delivered by Mahbub Uz Zaman , Secretary  
( Asia and Pacific ) Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh at the 14th Round  
Table Meet ( Enhancing Happiness and sustainable development through  
partnerships , Thimphu , Bhutan ( 12-14 March 2019 )**

Excellencies , ladies and gentleman .

It's truly satisfying to be with friends once more. I bring greetings from the leadership of Bangladesh. Let me point out to the similarities and identical interests that Bangladesh and Bhutan have in their developmental objectives. They are : Securing efficient economic growth , attain distributive justice and promote fundamental freedoms and protecting human rights. These are the values that our two political leaderships share .

Our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman always championed the cause of the downtrodden people and the toiling masses. He wanted to bring happiness and smile to the workers and labourers . Bangabandhu aspired for an exploitation free society and dreamt of a self sufficient Sonar Bangla ( Golden Bangla ) . That's why we broke away from all kinds of social and economic subjugation and domination and created An independent country .

The government under the dynamic leadership of Sheikh Hasina through the election manifesto 2018 titled “ Bangladesh on march towards prosperity “ focuses on 33 sectors to be dealt with two strategic plans - the SDG and Delta PAn 2100 . The vision is to increase the GDP growth rate to 10 percent from 7, 8 percent at the moment in the next five years and bring down poverty rate to zero from about 22 percent now by 2041. The priorities of the government are Good governance and show zero tolerance for Militancy and drug abuse and to crack down on corruption .

Good governance is an important domain of GNH . Gross National Happiness (GNH ) was a term that was coined by His Majesty the Fourth King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuk. His Majesty took a holistic approach where equal importance was given also to non economic aspects of well being .

UNCTAD rightly observes that graduation is the first mile stone in the marathon of development , not a winning post of a race to leave the LDC category . Graduation

with momentum requires a dedicated approach to facilitating structural transformation of economy in the era of SDGs .

The Honble Prime Minister of Bhutan was stating about the structural transformation that is taking place especially in the agriculture sector . But the dilemma that policy makers often face is how to make growth and productivity in the agriculture sector a sustainable one . Gunnar Myrdal in his famous book Asian Drama has rightfully remarked that it is in the agriculture sector that the Long run battle for economic development would be won Or lost . Agriculture provides foodstuffs, raw materials and Employs a substantial portion of the labour and work force . It's contribution to GDP is big but as the proportion of agriculture's contribution to GDP , food stuff and output and employment goes down due to structural transformation the agriculture sector itself has to grow in absolute terms to feed an ever growing population and rising demand for raw materials .

On 12th March, the 14th Round Table Meeting on the Theme “ Enhancing Happiness and Sustainable development through Partnerships “ was inaugurated by the Honble Prime Minister of Bhutan. He gave a very inspiring speech in which he emphasised on just not only growth but a structural transformation. I agree with his contention that growth is not merely about numbers. His concept is more akin to Meier and Baldwin's definition of development to which I also allude. Baldwin defines “ Economic development as a process whereby the country's real per capita income increases over a sustained period of Time , provided that the number of people living below the absolute poverty line does not increase and the distribution of income and wealth does not become more unequal “

As I was seeing the objectives of the RTM, I felt that Bangladesh could share her experience in least three of the five identified objectives of the RTM .

Objective number One that calls upon development partners to address the last mile challenges and consolidate development gains .

Comment [1]:

Objective number Three that stresses upon the stock taking of Bhutans developmental progress , challenges and future priorities including smooth transition

Comment [2]:

Objective Number four that emphasises on leveraging the opportunity presented by the 2030 Agenda And The SDGs To set out a joint vision of Bhutans sociology economic development through effective partnerships

AS regards objective number one, structural transformation enabled smooth transition after gradation of countries indicates how structural transformation and graduation from the LDCs arts Connected . For countries to overcome the challenges of slow structural change, policies targeting the growth of more productive sectors such as manufacturing and services could be implemented. To sustain long term structural change , the service sector has to be modernised in terms of both technology and skills .

Bangladesh has become eligible for graduation at the 2018 Triennial review of the Committee for Development Policy of the UN ECOSOC given its progress in Gross National Income Per Capita and the Human Assets Index. It has been emphasised by policy planners that LDCs need to graduate with momentum in order to avoid the pitfalls of the post graduation phase.

AS regards objective number two, Development of productive capacities and structural transformation has been identified as key factors for graduation ( UNCTAD Report 2016 ) . Given the identical situation and similarities that Bangladesh and Bhutan face, their efforts towards implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals May facilitate graduation since several objectives of the Istanbul Program of Action ( IPoA ) and SDGs have similarities .

As regards objective number three, Many of the SDGs are also similar to Bangladesh's objectives for the medium term outlined in its Seventh Five Year Plan ( 7FYP ) for the 2016 -2020 period . For Bhutan it is important that the core objectives of the SDGs are well incorporated in the 12th FYP. It is heartening to note that the 12th FYP of Bhutan generate synergies between GNH and SDGs and will be underpinned by the principle of ‘ leaving no one behind ‘

I am sure that the policy planners of Bhutan have identified the linkages between SDGs and LDC graduation. The 169 targets under 17 SDGs falls under the domain of economic , social, and environmental pillars of sustainability .The IPoA also delineates the priorities for smooth graduation . However , due to time constraints, I

could not discuss the Istanbul program of Action for LDCs in details . The IPoA has goals , targets and actions . The priority areas of the IPoA include productive capacity ; agriculture ; food security and rural development ; trade; commodities ; human and social development ; multiple crises and other emerging challenges ; mobilising financial resources for development and capacity building and good governance at all levels. Our development partners could do much in this regard.

At the end I would like to conclude with a few lines of a famous poet Alexander Pope , In his poem “ Happy the man “ he says that “

Happy the man , whose wish and care  
A few paternal acres bound  
Content to breathe his native air  
In his own ground,

Blest ! Who can unconcernedly find  
Hours, days and years slide soft away ,  
In health of body , peace of mind  
Quiet by day/  
Sound sleep ;,by night , study and ease .

Thank you , All