

## Inequality is the priority to act immediately: Global community must endorse its obligation of global partnership to assist countries fighting poverty, inequality and climate change

Upcoming high-level political forum on sustainable development from 10 to 19 July is going to review SDGs, Bangladesh with 43 other countries are sharing the Voluntary National Review (VNR). The reviews aim to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The set of seven goals to be reviewed in depth include Goal 17. The selected seven goals for VNR are : G-1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere, G-2: End hunger, achieve food security and adequate nutrition for all, and promote sustainable agriculture, G-3: Attain healthy life for all at all ages, G-5: Attain gender equality, empower women and girls everywhere, G-9: Promote sustainable industrialization, G-14: Attain conservation and sustainable use of marine resources, oceans and seas and G-17: Strengthen and enhance the means of implementation and global partnership for sustainable development. The Goal no 17 will be considered in each yearly review.

Bangladesh has taken positive steps in integrating SDGs in its five-year planning and the government has already taken steps for voluntary review in UN. Thus, it has shown its commitment to incorporate priorities of SDGs in development policies. It is now essential to reaffirm policy priority to poverty, inequality and climate change and necessary policy framework for enabling condition where democratic space, local government and civil society participation can play a significant role to achieve the goals.

The Government has declared an inclusive approach of development so that the poorest and the most vulnerable population can be integrated into its national development efforts; therefore declared whole society approach and engagement of all stakeholders in the process. It essentially requires a clear plan for strengthening democratic institutions and participatory governance to achieve SDGs in Bangladesh along with democratic process and participation of civil society in all level of implementation, from national to grass root level.

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Like the remarkable progress in achieving MDG, SDGs integration is succeeding positive steps in this regard we also should consider that there are growing trend of “de-globalization of humanitarian and development responsibility” there by shrinking trend of overseas development assistance. We appreciate the role of Bangladesh as courageous and commendable in undertaking responsibility towards sustainable development and grassroots participation that must emphasize the role of Local government, communities and local civil society in planning and implementation of SDGs.

### **1. Regional disparities and Inequalities should have priority concern:**

Our policy framework should review the effect of “export led growth” development approach and must consider the equality both in regions and ensuring distributive justice among different classes of people. State must ensure greater public investment in essential services like education, health, electricity, water, information communication technologies, and agriculture extension services etc. But for meeting different IFIs (International Financial Institutions) conditions, and for emphasizing the export led growth development approach, public investment in those essential services is shrinking. IFIs are pressurizing our government for indirect tax like VAT (Value Added Tax) which has already been proved as a discredited policy of IFIs prescriptions in elsewhere of the world in respect of local resource mobilization. So far, several tax dodging cases of MNCs (Multi-National Companies) have been leaked out. Even different WTO prescriptions are providing greater spaces to the MNCs without considering national

interest and capacities, while WTO is hardly fulfilling its commitment towards LDCs (Least Developed Countries) and developing countries. IFIs and WTO must respect policy spaces for LDCs and developing countries so that our country's sovereignty in decision making and very nature of state in respect of welfare and redistributive justice can be protected.

## **2. Eliminate loopholes in resource losses from our countries: act against illicit flows.**

Countries like Bangladesh needs huge resources for SDGs achievements which have forecasted annually around \$ 7 billion. Apart from this, Bangladesh has targeted to increases tax GDP ratio which might be 10 to 18 % in future. Bangladesh increases tax nets as well in the process of increasing indirect taxes like VAT which is regressive. Still direct and indirect tax ratio is around 50 - 50, while in developed countries percentage of direct taxes is high. But, Bangladesh is one of the countries in the top list of illicit fund flow, who lost around annually \$ 1 to 1.5 billion, internal corruption yielding the money in this regard. Most of this illicit flow is going towards developed countries and in their tax havens. Recently even some new Asian advance developing countries are preparing rules with "bottom to the race", to lure foreign capital, and they are becoming new tax havens. One country like Bangladesh cannot act alone to stop the illicit flow, if there are no international rules in respect of bank and tax transparency, rules to stop "bottom to the race" in respect of attracting foreign capital, no rules in respect of country by country reporting in respect MNCs accounts. In one hand our country should have firm commitment to stop corruption and as well as international communities must come up with a UN Tax Commission who will prepare rules in respect of bank and tax transparency. Developed countries might not need to pour new money as development assistance if they just commit to stop illicit flow of capital from LDCs and developing countries to their countries. Different studies show that while developed countries give \$ 1 as aid, in return they get back \$9 as illicit flow to their countries.

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## **3. Take a balance approach in respect of infrastructure for GROWTH and PROTECTION: people need to be protected from climate fall out.**

Bangladesh is one top hit list countries in respect of climate change. Although countries agreed in Paris Agreement, but US (United States) administrations pull out from the Paris Agreement has created a gloomy hope in this regard. We consider US people differently from Trump administration, as we see US states and people is advancing differently to contain carbon emission. In any way, this set back and due to INDC (Intended Nationally Determined Commitment) approach, it is forecasted that by the end of this century the world might experiences of warm hit which will be more than 3 degree Celsius. There will be fall out in climate finance too. Already Bangladesh is facing frequent cyclones, floods, loss of coastal lands due to sea water raise, river erosion, erratic weathers, saline water intrusion, and these problems have compounded with water withdrawal by neighboring country from common regional rivers. The problem could be minimized if there are infrastructures like embankment and dike which will protect the lands especially the coastal lands and water and sewerage infrastructure in towns, housing for slum dwellers in cities where people from climate hotspots are coming and taking shelters and in future such migration flow will be double. But our policy leaders give importance to the infrastructure which is related only to the growth, off course for economic development and employment it is needed, but now it is the time for planning infrastructure to protect our own people and to make the country climate resilient.

## **4. Bangladesh is innocent victim of climate change: international communities have obligation to take responsibilities of climate displacement.**

Different international reports have already mentioned that, Bangladesh is one of the top hit in climate change impact, while it emits negligible amount of carbon. The impacts are vivid already, which has already described in above para.

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Bangladesh is losing annually GDP 2 to 2.5 % due to these climate catastrophes of slow and rapid onset disasters. While this country is about to reach food self-sufficiency in recent years but due to floods it's again falling back in this regard. The problem is being compounded as because of land loss due to river erosion, saline water intrusion, desertification in northern part which have already observed and especially due to water withdrawal in common rivers by the upper riparian country. It is forecasted that, there will be 1/3 of Bangladesh especially 24 coastal districts (out of total 64 districts) will go under water, climate displacement will be 30 million. By next 20 to 50 years due to climate displacements from coastal area and rapid urbanization, most of the people will take habitation in urban area. The country has one of the highest levels of per square kilometer population density of 1100 now and which might reach 2000 by

the end of this century, while it is 325 to 350 in India and in Africa average 225 to 500. Climate displaced already hits in cross border level. As developed countries historically responsible for high level of carbon emission, then these countries have to assist Bangladesh to make the country climate resilient and take the responsibilities of climate displaced.

## 5. Strengthening democratic Institutions should be the key for achieving SDGs.

Democracy and development must go hand in hand, there is no question of one will come first or one will go later. History of different nations has proved that, without participatory democracy no development will be sustainable and society will not have sustained peace. So, strengthening democratic institution must get priority in respect of SDGs planning. In this respect, we underline for strengthening democratic process and institutions to create enabling environment for inclusive process and participatory governance including spaces for the civil societies in all level.

## Signatory Organizations



ARPAN, Bangladesh Krishak Federation (BKF), Bangaldesh Agricultural Farm Labour Federation (BAFLF), Bangladesh Kishani Sobha (BKS), Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC), Community Development Partnership (CDP), Coastal Livelihood and Ecological Action Network (CLEAN), COAST Trust, Dak Diya Jai, Dwip Unnayn Sangstha (DUS), EquityBD Bangladesh, Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP), Jatio Shromik Jot, Noakhali Rural Development Society (NRDS), Online Knowledge Society, Participatory Research Action Network (PRAN), Sangram, Society for Environment and Development Observer (SDO), SDG Watch Bangladesh, SUPRO, Uddipan, Voice of South

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