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### **Press Release**

The first Bangladesh-US Partnership Dialogue was held at the US Department of State in Washington DC on 19-20 September 2012. Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Mohamed Mijarul Quayes led the 20-member Bangladesh Delegation at the Dialogue. The US Delegation was led by US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Ms. Wendy Sherman. The two sides held extensive discussions on the entire range of bilateral issues. They also took up an extensive set of regional issues such as connectivity, counter-terrorism and energy cooperation etc.

The Bangladesh delegation included Bangladesh Ambassador to the USA Akramul Qader, Secretary Energy and Mineral Resources Division Mohammad Mejbahuddin, Executive Chairman of BEPZA Maj. Gen. ATM Shahidul Islam, ndc, psc, Additional Secretary of Economic Relations Division Arastoo Khan, Additional Secretary of Ministry of Commerce Amitava Chakraborty, Joint Secretary of Labour Md. Faizur Rahman. On the US side Under Secretary Sherman was joined by, among others, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Robert Blake, Assistant Secretary of State for Political and Military Affairs Andrew Shapiro, Ambassador at Large for Women's Affairs Melanne Verveer, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Geoffery R. Pyatt, USAID Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for Asia Denise Rollins, Special Representative for International Labour Affairs Ms. Barbara Shailor and so on.

On the first day of the Dialogue, the two sides met in Focus Group format in three segments viz. development & governance, trade & investment, and security cooperation. The delegation met in the plenary format on the second day. Both sides expressed satisfaction at the holding of the first round of the Partnership Dialogue since its formalization through an agreement signed in May, 2012. They recognized the value the Dialogue adds to Bangladesh-US relations.

The United States acknowledged that Bangladesh's strategic location at the crossroads of global powerhouses in South and East Asia was a key to its potential in linking these regions, including China and the Indian Ocean. The United States appreciated Bangladesh's commitment and initiatives in regional cooperation and efforts for enhancing physical connectivity, and regional approaches to water resources

management and power generation.

Bangladesh Delegation highlighted its development efforts, strategies and priorities. The US Delegation reiterated its commitment to keep itself engaged with Bangladesh's development efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, support for a vibrant civil society, and capacity for improved governance. While lauding Bangladesh's success in women empowerment and several other social indicators, the US reiterated its commitment to working with Bangladesh in these and related sectors including healthcare. Bangladesh strongly articulated its case for access to the Millennium Challenge Fund. The US side conveyed readiness to receive a delegation to discuss the issue of accessing the Fund with the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

Bangladesh also raised its long standing demand of duty free quota free access for its products into US market; and stressed that greater market access would eventually contribute to better terms of employment for the workers, including wages and work environment, encourage women empowerment and promote environment friendly lifestyle of Bangladesh workforce. The US side indicated their plan to send US trade and investment expert delegations to Bangladesh for exploring avenues of cooperation, including moving forward on this issue.

Both sides agreed on the value of a platform for discussing trade and investment issues, and noted the progress made in negotiations on the TICFA.

The US spoke of Bangladesh's vital role in global security and stability as one of the top troop contributing countries under UN peacekeeping operations. Bangladesh raised the issue of greater representation of troop contributing countries in command positions on the ground as well as at the UNPKO policy level. Bangladesh also spoke of the need to expand the peace keeping mandate in terms of post-conflict peace building. The US delegation praised Bangladesh's counter-terrorism efforts and they particularly lauded the bold initiatives of Bangladesh Prime Minister to root out terrorism from Bangladesh.

The Foreign Secretary invited his counterpart to the next round of the Partnership Dialogue to be held in Bangladesh in 2013.

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Deputy Chief of Mission

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