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Date : 29 October 2014

The third Bangladesh-USA Partnership Dialogue held

The third Bangladesh-USA Partnership Dialogue was held in Washington D.C. on 28-29 October 2014. Foreign Secretary Md. Shahidul Haque led the 9-member Bangladesh delegation at the dialogue. The US Delegation was led by US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman.

The Dialogue contained three Working Group meetings on 28 October while the second day was dedicated for plenary session. The working group meetings focused on "Development & Governance", "Trade & Investment", and "Security Cooperation". A broad spectrum of bilateral issues including sustainable development, climate change, migration, scientific & technological cooperation, cyber security, regional integration, blue economy, energy cooperation, peacekeeping operations, counter-terrorism, education and cultural links etc. was discussed.

In the plenary session, summaries of working groups' discussions were presented. The two leaders emphasized on enhancing bilateral relations between the two countries and reiterated their commitments to work together on issues of both national and global interests. Wendy Sherman congratulated Bangladesh for its success in the recent elections at Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Inter-Parliamentary Union, UN Human Rights Commission, International Telecommunications Union and for successful bid of Bangladesh for hosting 9th Global Forum on Migration and Development in Dhaka in 2016. She paid her tribute to 119 Bangladeshi peacekeepers who sacrificed their lives on the line of their duty, and acknowledged Bangladesh's unparalleled leadership role in promoting international peace and security worldwide. Under Secretary termed Bangladesh a role model for its significant achievements in socio-economic field including attainment of MDG goals. At the end of the Dialogue, a joint statement was issued which is attached.

On the sideline of the partnership dialogue, Foreign Secretary Haque met with senior US Government officials including Nisha Desai Biswal, Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of South & Central Asian Affairs, and Deputy United States Trade Representative, Ambassador Robert Holleyman.

During the meeting with Assistant Secretary Biswal, Foreign Secretary briefed the Assistant Secretary about priorities of the present government in areas such as governance, law and order, counter-terrorism, economic stability, and labor rights. They also discussed on regional integration and various regional and sub-regional arrangements including SAARC, BCIM and BIMSTEC. Assistant Secretary Nisha Biswal emphasized that situated at the cross-road of the South and South East Asia, Bangladesh would continue its leading role in promoting regional integration.

The Foreign Secretary had a meeting with the Deputy US Trade Representative Ambassador Robert Holleyman, which was joined, among others, by Assistant USTR, Michael J. Delaney and representatives from the Department of Labor and the Department of State. Foreign Secretary briefed them on the progress concerning workers' rights and workplace safety in the RMG sector in Bangladesh. The US side acknowledged and appreciated the progress made by the Government of Bangladesh in ensuring workers' rights and workplace safety, and hoped that the progress would continue with the same level of intensity.

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Joint Statement of the Third U.S. - Bangladesh Partnership Dialogue

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson
Washington, DC
October 29, 2014



The governments of the United States and Bangladesh, led respectively by U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman and Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque, convened the third annual Partnership Dialogue on October 28-29, 2014 in Washington, DC. The two leaders highlighted the robust and growing bilateral ties between Bangladesh and the United States and affirmed that the relationship is based on shared values and common goals of the two countries and their peoples. The two leaders recognized that the Partnership Dialogue, established in 2012, presents an opportunity for the two moderate and pluralistic nations to engage in fruitful discussions towards a broader and deeper relationship.

Working Group discussions on October 28 covered the full range of bilateral and regional topics of interest, including development and governance, trade and investment, and security cooperation. During a plenary session on October 29, the co-chairs reviewed progress by their delegations and identified areas for deepened cooperation on bilateral, regional and international priorities, including sustainable development, counterterrorism, migration, and climate change.

Strong Cooperation since the Second Partnership Dialogue

Following the second Partnership Dialogue in Dhaka in May 2013, Bangladesh and the United States have demonstrated their shared commitment to broadening and deepening their partnership, including through the signing of multiple agreements in November 2013. The Counterterrorism Cooperation Initiative enabled improved information sharing and communication to fight terrorism in Bangladesh, in the region, and beyond. A memorandum of understanding between the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency and the Ministry of Home Affairs of Bangladesh charted a path for counternarcotics cooperation. The signing of the Trade and Investment Cooperation Framework Agreement (TICFA) established an annual forum to identify and address obstacles to increasing bilateral trade and investment. The first TICFA meeting in Dhaka in April 2014 resulted in, among other outcomes, the elimination by Bangladesh of import duties on fire-safety equipment.

The security cooperation between the two countries also grew over the past 17 months. The United States transferred the former Coast Guard cutter *Jarvis* to Bangladesh on October 26, 2013. The newly re-christened *Somudra Joy*, the largest ship in the Bangladesh Navy, delivered 40 tons of aid to the victims of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines during the ship's initial voyage from California to Chittagong. The United States plans to transfer a second coast guard cutter, the *USCGC Rush*, to join its sister ship in spring 2015. These transfers are a tangible demonstration of the United States' commitment to strengthen Bangladesh's capability to ensure the maritime security of the Bay of Bengal. The United States Pacific Command continued to actively engage Bangladesh military counterparts with annual exercises including the Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) and Pacific Resilience Disaster Relief Exercise and Exchange (PR DREE). United States Special Operations Command Pacific continued trainings in the area of counterterrorism with a number of Bangladesh security forces – including the Bangladesh Navy Special Warfare and Diving Salvage (SWADS) unit and the Bangladesh Army 1st Para Commando Battalion (PCB). Bangladesh also co-hosted a peacekeeping summit at the 2014 UN General Assembly with U.S. Vice President Joe Biden. At that forum, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh, the world's largest troop contributing country, announced even greater contributions to global peace and security. The Bangladesh Delegation appreciates the U.S. efforts to promote the professionalization of the Bangladesh military by pursuing ways to increase the number of Bangladeshis studying at U.S. military institutions.

The United States has actively supported Bangladesh's work to promote workers' safety and labor rights, with particular emphasis on the garment sector. During an October 20 conference on the Bangladesh-EU-U.S.-International Labor Organization Sustainability Compact, Bangladesh and United States reaffirmed their shared commitment to ensuring safe working conditions and protecting workers' rights. The United States acknowledged Bangladesh's progress in establishing a preliminary online database of inspections, working toward improving the capacity and resources of the labor inspectorate, beginning to hire new inspectors, carrying out factory inspections, registering new unions, and dropping cases against labor activists. At the same time, both sides agree to continue working together to address outstanding needs to safeguard labor rights and workers' health and safety. Both sides continue to work on the Action Plan to reauthorize Bangladesh's Generalized System of Preferences benefit at the earliest opportunity. The United States has supported efforts to advance worker rights and worker safety with over \$10 million in aid for worker safety and labor rights. USAID plans to announce \$5 million in new funding to help protect workers. The United States remains committed to supporting Bangladesh's ongoing efforts to combat the trafficking of its citizens, especially in overseas labor markets. The United States acknowledged the presence of a vibrant civil society in Bangladesh, and both nations discussed ways to protect the important work of civil society along with broader citizens' rights and fundamental freedoms.

Moving Forward to Greater Collaboration

As the two nations look to the future, both delegations identified areas for greater collaboration. Recognizing Bangladesh's role as a regional leader and seat of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), the United States offered its full support for increased regional economic integration and connectivity initiatives, including development of the Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor, facilitation of cross-border trade, energy cooperation, and increased women's economic participation. For the first time within the Partnership Dialogue, the United States and Bangladesh discussed the rapidly growing threats in cyberspace. The two countries recognized the importance of international cooperation to promote an open and secure cyberspace, and discussed opportunities for greater collaboration on cyber-security and to combat cybercrime.

The United States and Bangladesh also discussed the importance of safeguarding the environment, and the United States outlined a broad program in Bangladesh to spur development of a national forest inventory that will help reduce deforestation, curb illegal logging, and contribute to the monitoring of forest change.

Recognizing the threat of terrorism in the world, and acknowledging the effectiveness of counterterrorism and anti-money laundering acts in Bangladesh, the two countries expressed deep commitment to continue to cooperate to counter terrorist financing and violent extremism. As part of the globally recognized Financial Action Task Force (FATF) framework, in December, the U.S.

Embassy in Dhaka and the State Department will host a South Asia regional workshop in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh to focus on best practices to counter violent extremism and terrorist financing.

Bangladesh and the United States reaffirmed a mutual commitment to the full and equal economic and political participation of women and girls, which is essential to prosperity and continued growth. Recognizing Bangladesh's progress in reducing maternal mortality, access to girl's primary education and reducing poverty, the two delegations agreed to focus on challenges facing adolescent girls, including girls' access to secondary education and the prevention of, and response to, early and forced marriage. The United States and Bangladesh will continue to work together to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, and strengthen women's access to healthcare services. We reaffirmed our commitment to work together through the Equal Futures Partnership.

With a focus on the future of the bilateral relationship, both sides recognize the importance of engaging youth in dialogue and promoting shared values, aspirations, and overlapping interests. The two countries will seek to inspire youth to address today's challenges and to advocate for positive change. Both countries also intend to expand people-to-people ties by exploring ways to increase professional, academic, and educational exchanges and expand linkages between educational institutions.

Recognizing Bangladesh's leading voice in fighting climate change and recognizing Bangladesh's climate vulnerability, among others, due to low lying coastline, the two sides vow to work together, particularly in assisting adaptation projects through continuing USAID programs.

The United States and Bangladesh recognize the ongoing threat presented by the Ebola virus and have decided to work together to strengthen the capacity for response within Bangladesh.

Together, both nations recognized the importance of this relationship and look forward to further broadening, deepening, and strengthening the U.S.-Bangladesh partnership.

The two sides agreed to schedule a visit by Bangladesh Foreign Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali to the United States at the earliest opportunity.

Both the leaders expressed satisfaction at the successful completion of the third Partnership Dialogue. The Bangladesh Foreign Secretary thanked the U.S. Undersecretary for Political Affairs for the wonderful hospitality. Both sides agreed to hold the fourth Partnership Dialogue in Dhaka in 2015.

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