

**Statement by Hon'ble State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh  
in the 17<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD)  
at 13:00 pm (Bangladesh Time) on 21 January 2021, Virtual Mode**

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Hon'ble Chair, H.E. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey

Distinguished Ministers of the ACD Member States,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamualaikum and greetings from Dhaka.

It is an honour and privilege for me to join the 17<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting of Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) even amid this global crisis caused by COVID-19 pandemic. At the outset, let me pay my deepest respect to the memory of our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The cherished dream of independence of Bangladesh came true due to his charismatic and visionary leadership. His clarion call of independence on 7 March united and inspired the Bangali nation to fight for liberation. That is why UNESCO included the historic 7<sup>th</sup> March speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the "Memory of the World International Register" in 2017. It is a matter of joy that celebration of the Birth Centenary of the Father of the Nation and observance of golden jubilee of our independence coincide this year in 2021.

I extend my sincere thanks and deep appreciation to the current ACD Chair, the Republic of Turkey and the ACD Secretariat for their commitments and excellent efforts to arrange this virtual meeting.

I take the opportunity to welcome the initiative of the World Health Organization (WHO) to designate 2021 as the International Year of Health and Care Workers (YHCW) at the 73<sup>rd</sup> World Health Assembly. I hope that an effective and safe vaccine against COVID-19 will be equally accessible which can help us to return to "The New Normal".

## **Excellencies,**

As a proud Bangladeshi I can say, Bangladesh has a host of natural treasures such as sea beaches, lakes, rivers, hills and forests etc. that offer significant value for tourist attractions. The Chittagong Hill Tracts with its scenic waterfalls and green hills, the world's longest uninterrupted sandy Cox's Bazar sea beach and the largest Sundarbans mangrove forest are the most popular tourist attractions in Bangladesh.

During winter season, Bangladesh becomes a charming place for migratory birds. Mainly, plenty of habitats for migratory and seasonal birds have made our country a paradise for ornithologists and nature lovers. Obviously, these geographical facts and features have established Bangladesh as a desirable destination for the tourists around the world.

Bangladesh is also rich in handicrafts and readymade apparel industry. For example- Jamdani, a flagship of Bangladeshi traditional handicraft has been recognized as intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO back in 2013 due to its special characteristics, quality and reputation. Jamdani is one of the surviving ancient patterns of legendary Muslin. There is a saying that the Muslin woven in Bangladesh is so soft and fine that six yards of the fabric could pass through a single ring of the index finger! During the 18th century Muslin was highly popular in Europe and the Middle East.

Unfortunately, according to a very recent report, the total loss of tourism sector of Bangladesh is around \$2 billion in the end of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government of Bangladesh has made special allocation in the budget of FY 2020-21 to recover the losses of the tourism sector.

Public private partnership, innovation & digitalization, strong health protocols in promoting tourism would be the key driving forces to make ACD region the top tourist destination. It is my fervent hope that, with the support of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the ACD Member States will be able to build sustainable, resilient and well-diversified supply chains.

**Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Delegates,**

I would like to seek your kind cooperation in settling Rohingya crisis. We are still grappling to arrange accommodation for around 1.1 million Forcibly Displaced Rohingya people. I would like to draw your kind attention to the fact that due to the presence of a huge number of Rohingya people, environmental degradation is taking place in Cox's Bazar area which is one of the major tourist spot of Bangladesh. Bangladesh expressed her deep political will and sincere commitment to settle Rohingya crisis through bilateral and multilateral approach. Thank you for your support, so far you have extended.

Two centuries ago, the world abolished slavery by the power of humanity. We also pledged that genocide will happen "Never again" in the world. So, it will only require our true willingness to stop all kinds of misanthropic activities such as terrorism, genocide and all sorts of violence.

**Excellencies,**

In my concluding remarks, I deeply appreciate the offer of the State of Qatar to host the long awaited 3rd ACD Summit in 2021. Bangladesh is keen to provide all possible assistance to strengthen the ACD secretariat as well as to appoint diplomats in future.

I thank you all, Excellencies, for your time and for your kind attention.

Joy Bangla!

Joy Bangabandhu!

May Bangladesh live forever!

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