

BANGLADESH-AUSTRALIA MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE, DHAKA

JOINT STATEMENT

21 MAY 2024

1. Bangladesh's Hon'ble Foreign Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud, MP and Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs Senator the Hon Penny Wong held their first ministerial dialogue on Tuesday, 21 May 2024 in Dhaka.
2. The Ministers noted the warm bilateral relationship founded on more than fifty years of diplomatic relations and deepening friendship between our peoples. They recognised that high-level visits at the political level can help take the relationship to further new heights.
3. The Ministers recalled the constructive, positive bilateral discussions held at the **Indian Ocean Conference** in Perth in February 2024, following those during the Indian Ocean Conference in Dhaka in 2023. They noted ongoing collaboration and cooperation in regional and multilateral fora, including the **Indian Ocean Rim Association** and at the **United Nations**.
4. The Ministers appreciated the **growing strategic depth and dimensions** of the bilateral relations. They noted the commonalities between Bangladesh's Indo-Pacific Outlook, the Indian Ocean Rim Association's Indo-Pacific Outlook and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. They reaffirmed their shared vision and desire to work towards a region that is peaceful, stable, prosperous, inclusive and free from intimidation, interference and coercion.
5. The Ministers acknowledged the importance of building regional health security, promoting demographic resilience, enhancing multi-modal connectivity, and strengthening clean energy supply chains. The Ministers agreed on the importance of promoting open channels of communication and confidence-building measures to reduce the risk of conflict in the region.
6. The Ministers reaffirmed their support for sovereignty and territorial integrity in the **Indo-Pacific**, democratic values, human rights, freedom of navigation and overflight, and the peaceful resolution of disputes. Australia and Bangladesh are committed to working together to find practical solutions to shared contemporary challenges, including maritime security threats, climate change, cybercrimes and countering trafficking in persons.
7. The Ministers discussed developments in the Indo-Pacific and **Middle East**. The Ministers reiterated their shared concern about the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, which has been exacerbated following the 7 October attacks, calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and reaffirming support for a two-state solution.

8. The Ministers also expressed serious concern over the ongoing war in **Ukraine** and its repercussions around the world. They reiterated the call for a peace process through dialogue and diplomacy with respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders and in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter.
9. The Ministers expressed their deep concern at the deteriorating conflict situation in **Myanmar** and its effect on regional security and stability, calling for scaling up of efforts by ASEAN and other key regional actors.
10. The Ministers affirmed their intention to enhance cooperation on **deepening two-way trade and economic ties** as Bangladesh progresses towards graduation from UN LDC status, with Australia committing to maintain tariff-free, quota-free access to its market to support Bangladesh's smooth transition. The Bangladesh Minister provided assurances that necessary support would be given to Australian investors, including in thrust sectors like agro-processing, ICT and logistics.
11. The Ministers noted Australia's ongoing funding for **multilateral development banks** to support Bangladesh's efforts to address its priority **structural reforms** that would bolster development and economic growth. The Ministers stressed the need for strengthening the international financial architecture.
12. Noting the importance of **enhanced connectivity** to increase regional economic integration and growth, the Ministers discussed Australian technical support in partnership with the World Bank and International Finance Corporation to connectivity measures via the **South Asia Regional Infrastructure Connectivity** programme. The Ministers agreed to work further on bilateral air connectivity and cable connectivity resilience.
13. The Ministers acknowledged the importance of **skills development and training** to foster inclusive economic growth, with Australia announcing AUD 3 million in support for delivery of technical and vocational training for Bangladesh's youth. The Bangladesh Minister expressed interest in enhancing cooperation with Australia in the fields of research and innovation. The Ministers affirmed Australia's long-standing commitment to building capacity in Bangladesh, with over 3,000 Bangladeshis having completed studies under the Australia Awards Scholarships and Fellowship Programme since 1982. Working with the UNDP, Australia has provided technical assistance and policy support towards developing a strategy for **inclusive social security system**.
14. Australia and Bangladesh reaffirmed the vital importance of **gender equality and women's empowerment** in all fields, notably across education, government and parliamentary representation. Australia reaffirmed its support for investments to promote women's

economic empowerment. Recognising gender equality as a shared priority with opportunities for regional leadership, the Ministers agreed to work bilaterally and multilaterally to combat all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.

15. The Ministers agreed on the importance of enhanced **cooperation on climate change**, including funding of vital climate adaptation and mitigation measures. Australia emphasised its partnership with Bangladesh to support agricultural production and adaptation research, including through the work of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research. They discussed enhancing cooperation on capacity building for accessing international climate financing. Bangladesh welcomed the forthcoming visit by Australia's Ambassador for Climate Change, and offered to share some of its locally-led adaptation solutions with the Pacific Island countries, including through trilateral engagement with Australia.
16. Australia acknowledged the generosity of the Bangladesh government and people in hosting the forcibly **displaced Rohingyas from Myanmar**, and Bangladesh acknowledged the sustained humanitarian contribution of the Australian Government to support the Rohingyas and host communities in Bangladesh, with both Ministers underlining the importance of working towards the Rohingyas' safe and dignified repatriation to Myanmar.
17. The Ministers confirmed their commitment to enhancing **maritime and oceans capabilities** as a critical means to protecting our marine environment and promoting sovereignty and the rule of law. The Ministers agreed to strengthen cooperation to combat people's smuggling and transnational crimes across the region, including through prioritising cooperation between their **coast guards**. Ministers agreed to support regional and international efforts towards combatting transnational organised crimes in the Indo-Pacific through both normative and practical actions.
18. As founding members of the **Bali Process** on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, Australia and Bangladesh expressed concern about the loss of life and exploitation of vulnerable people such as the Rohingyas, including women and children, at the hands of transnational criminal networks. The Australian Minister noted that the Commander of Australia's Maritime Border Command will visit Bangladesh to further discuss these issues. The Ministers agreed on the importance of safe migration pathways in our region to curb irregular and unsafe migration patterns.
19. Noting the growth in the Bangladesh diaspora in Australia and the contributions made by our two peoples to deepening the bilateral relationship, the Ministers affirmed the importance of preservation and promotion of arts and culture, and committed to signing a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in **Arts and Culture**.
