

**Statement by His Excellency Mr. M. Serajul Islam, Ambassador of the People's Republic of Bangladesh at 13<sup>th</sup> Eco Asia, Gifu Prefecture**

**Madam President  
Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen**

This is indeed an opportunity for all the participating countries to exchange our views and share our experience to address one of the biggest problems of the present day world, namely the problems related to environment. I must record here a note of appreciation for the sustained efforts and contribution of the Government of Japan in this regard. I would like in particular to congratulate the Ministry of Environment of Japan for organizing the 13<sup>th</sup> Eco Asia. This is a commendable effort as the discussions under this forum have been taking place since 1991. I would also like to thank the Gifu Prefectural Government for their role in hosting this year's Eco Asia.

**Madam President**

This year's meeting also coincides with the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Conference on Renewable Energies, which is an important meeting as it involves the lawmakers of this vast region in a discussion of high importance. I am sure the lawmakers' conference will be discussing the subject of renewable energy for the benefit of all the participants. It is also a matter of happiness that the Expo 2005 at Aichi is going on now which has chosen 'nature's wisdom' as its theme. This certainly is befitting. Bangladesh is also participating in this event. I am also happy that Eco Asia has been putting emphasis on local level initiatives. During the last year's meeting, some local level initiatives and action were showcased at this forum. This year also presentations by the local level initiatives have been incorporated. These are important examples. Participants can examine these initiatives to see if they can be replicated in their respective countries. I would like to congratulate the local level participants for their work.

**Madam President**

As we set our feet in a new millennium, we are faced with new challenges as well as possibilities. It requires concerted efforts to confront the challenges and tap the potentials for the benefit of the humanity. It is also imperative that countries remain focused on chalking out suitable strategies for their committed implementation.

We in Bangladesh have set out a vision incorporating vital areas such as eradication of poverty, good governance, conservation of nature and supporting environmentally sustainable development. We do understand that development is linked to environment and development at the cost of environment can not be a sustained one. Our development programs, projects and nature conservation activities, therefore,

aim at the vital task of eradication of poverty through accessing resources equitably, conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.

**Madam President,**

To deal with the environment related issues Ministry of Environment & Forests was established in 1989. Since its establishment, the Ministry has been playing a pro-active role in various areas of conservation of environment.

One of our major achievements is the banning of the polythene. The present government of Bangladesh succeeded in banning the use, production and marketing of polythene shopping bags, which were degrading our fragile environment. The two-stroke three wheelers were another problem, which has been causing air pollution. That problem is being resolved with the introduction of environment friendly CNG driven vehicles. CNG driven vehicles have replaced environment polluting two-stroke three wheelers since January 2003. The other initiatives in this regard include: phase wise withdrawal of age-old public transport vehicles from the streets of capital Dhaka, mandatory raising of chimneys of brick kilns to 120 feet and promotion of compressed block bricks to conserve the fragile environment. Various tannery industries are also being re-located with proper effluent treatment plants. Bangladesh has also taken measures to save our rivers from pollution and illegal occupation. We have also been exploring the possibility of generating environment-friendly energy from the waste.

We have initiated a massive tree plantation program. The program has been turned into a social movement for the last few years. Our goal is to bring at least 20% of the total landmass of the country under forest cover by the year 2015. We have also undertaken an ambitious plan to plant 10 million coconut trees in the coastal areas of Bangladesh. Our ongoing participatory and social forestry programs are in progress aiming at poverty alleviation. None of the programs will succeed unless we incorporate environment in the curricula for school children. Government of Bangladesh has, therefore, undertaken an initiative to incorporate environmental curricula at the primary and secondary school levels.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

To ensure sustainable environment management, the Government is also implementing Sustainable Environment Management Programme (SEMP) with financial assistance of UNDP. SEMP, as the follow-up implementation of National Environment Management Action Programme (NEMAP), addresses the major environmental priorities identified by people through NEMAP. It is the first Programme approach initiative of the country office as well as the Government of Bangladesh, consisting of 26 projects (components) being executed by the Ministry of

Environment and Forest and implemented by 21 government/non-government agencies throughout Bangladesh. The major objectives of SEMP include:

- Prevent and reverse present trend of environmental degradation
- Promote sustainable development
- Reduce poverty
- Capacity strengthening at community, local and national levels.

Focus areas of SEMP relating to the environment are Policy and Institutions; Participatory Eco-System Management; Community-based Environmental Sanitation; Advocacy and Awareness; and Training and Education.

SEMP will support community capacities for sustainable management of environmental resources and strengthen the capacity of the public sector to develop new framework for policy development in support of enhanced community participation, protection of the environment, and sustainable management of the country's environment and natural resources. SEMP will benefit grassroots level people, particularly women, in eco-specific intervention areas.

**Madam President**

I am happy to inform you that in Bangladesh the level of awareness about the issues related to environment has increased a lot in the course of last few years. This is also a matter of satisfaction that we have succeeded in undertaking steps to cope with the environmental degradation. Many of our programs have been successfully implemented, others are being implemented. We have set target dates for many programs and are hopeful that we will be able to achieve our target. It should, however, be noted that we alone can not achieve the goals. We need support and assistance from others. We also need to learn from each other's experience. We feel that Eco Asia is playing a vital role in this regard.

I wish Eco Asia 2005 a success.

Thank you.