

*12 th Environment Congress for Asia and the Pacific (ECO ASIA )*

Statement of  
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Ministry of Environment and Forests  
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

*19-20 June  
Yonago City, Tottori Prefecture  
(Yonago Convention Center)  
Japan*

Mr President  
Her Excellency Ms. Yuriko Koike  
Hon'ble Minister of Environment of Japan  
Mr. Yoshihiro Katayama, Governor of Tottori  
Mr. Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director of UNEP  
Hon'ble Environmental Ministers from the Asia-Pacific region  
Distinguished Guests  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning!

It is a great honor for me to be present in this beautiful Yonago City, Tottori on the occasion of ECO ASIA 2004. My delegation expresses its heartfelt thanks to the Government of Japan and the Tottori Prefectural government for hosting the conference. I also had the privilege of attending the ECO ASIA Conference held at Hayama, Kanagawa in 2003. I believe this event provides us an opportunity to exchange views and ideas on regional cooperation towards sustainable development for Asia and the Pacific.

Mr. President,

To start with let me congratulate the Government of Japan for successful holding meetings of ECO ASIA since 1991. Holding of 12 meetings so far indicates the importance and usefulness of this forum of the policy makers of Asia and the Pacific. The opportunity for free exchange of views enables the policy makers to promote effective cooperation in environmental conservation of this region.

Mr. President,

I have looked at the agenda of the meeting. It is heartening to note that the meeting will discuss among others, issues related to environmental education. The concept of developing environmental curricula for primary and secondary levels of education is a felt need to educate our children on environmental conservation and natural resource management.

We in Bangladesh, have undertaken an initiative to incorporate environmental curricula at the primary and secondary levels. We have already developed a set of environmental curricula for the primary and secondary levels. A group of teachers and field supervisors are being trained in this regard.

Mr President,

Bangladesh is a small and developing country in South Asia. In the backdrop of our struggle against various odds to achieve sustainable development, Bangladesh is highly committed to conserve of environment and the eco-system. Our environment policy is focused to achieving sustainable development through effective poverty reduction. We are committed to achieving the "Millennium Development Goals" of halving poverty by 2015. We believe that with increased people's support, you can implement any plan or program addressing the environmental issues and concerns of the nation.

In Bangladesh under the leadership of the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, we have banned on the use, production and marketing of polythene shopping bags, which were degrading our fragile environment. Environment polluting two-stroke three wheelers have been replaced by environment –friendly CNG driven vehicles since January 2003.

The other initiatives include: phase-wise withdrawal of age-old public transport vehicles from the streets of Dhaka, mandatory raising of chimneys of brick kilns to 120 ft and promotion of compressed block bricks to conserve the fragile environment. Various tannery industries are being re-located with proper effluent treatment plants. Side by side, we have taken measures to rescue our rivers from pollution and illegal occupation. We have also been exploring possibility of generating environment-friendly energy from the waste.

Mr. President

We have a massive tree plantation program, which has been turned into a social movement for the last few years. This year also we are going for a year-long tree plantation movement throughout the country in order 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

to be completed by the year end. Our on-going participatory and social forestry programmes are in progress aiming at poverty alleviation.

The present government has also underscored the importance of various wetlands in relation to overall national environment. Initiatives have been for conserving and improving the state of the threatened wetlands within the country.

Mr. President,

During deliberations of the conference, I believe, we would have the opportunity to revisit our policy and priority issues in the Asia-Pacific region.

Once again, on behalf of Bangladesh delegation and on my own behalf, I extend my sincere gratitude to you and wish the Twelfth Environment Congress for Asia- Pacific region a success.

I thank you all for your patient hearing.