



UN-OHRLLS

Your Excellency, Mr Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, Hon'able Minister of Finance of Bangladesh
Your Excellency, Mr. Md. Shahidul Haque, Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh
Excellencies, My fellow UN Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, allow me to express my sincere appreciation to you all for your active participation in, and contribution to this very important meeting.

I understand many of you have travelled from countries that are quite far-away from Dhaka, as well as nearby countries, but you came here with dedication and wealth of experiences to share on achieving sustainable graduation for least developed countries. This shows a very strong commitment of all of you, to come here and tell us what your national plans are, what you are doing to achieve graduation from the LDC category and what are the challenges that you face. And then of course, how to really ensure that we collectively meet the goal of the Istanbul Programme of Action on graduation.

Bringing together representatives of LDCs and graduated countries, development partners, regional and international organizations, private sector and the civil society has, in my opinion, enabled us to have a fruitful multi-stakeholder dialogue, in terms of experiences and devising a forward-looking approach to deal with the challenges and aspirations related to graduation.

We have had very detailed discussion on how to respond to the challenges linked to graduation as well as how graduation can generate momentum in building productive capacities in these countries.

Few key messages from the two days' discussion that I have taken careful note of include: First, it has been encouraging to hear from the graduated countries that LDC graduation didn't change the fundamentals of their economy and country, and there is a need to look at graduation positively.

Second, most graduated countries are still vulnerable, especially to climate change. This has to be addressed in the preparation for graduation and in the transition strategies.

Third, strengthened global partnerships are crucial for development and sustainable graduation. Development partners play a critical role in ensuring smooth transition for graduated countries. Forth, key issues to focus at country level for achieving sustainable graduation include building on synergies between the fight against poverty, increasing inequalities and social cohesion; local economic development & civil society participation, with focus on youth and women; strengthening domestic private sector, value chains in key sectors (agribusiness, fisheries, tourism); improving investment climate; job creation with focus on youth; and expanding the fiscal base.

Distinguished Participants,

My Office looks forward to working hand in hand with all of you to ensure that we can reduce the anxiety related to graduation and to achieve the overall objective of the Istanbul Programme of Action on enabling half of the LDCs to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020. The deliberations of this meeting will feed into the Expert Group Meeting on UN support for

graduation and smooth transition of LDCs, taking place on 14 December. In addition, the discussions of this meeting will contribute to the Secretary-General's report on Graduation and Smooth Transition that my Office is preparing in 2018.

I wish to seize this opportunity to extend my deep appreciation to the Government and the people of Bangladesh for their excellent hosting of this very important meeting, and for extending to us their wonderful generosity and hospitality. Hosting this event signals clearly Bangladesh's firm commitment to graduate and make rapid progress in its development trajectory.

I would also like to commend the Bangladesh mission in New York, as they remain substantively engaged in all relevant forums of the UN and other multilateral organizations, especially as the Chair of the global coordination bureau of LDCs, to promote and protect the interest of LDCs. These efforts have seen fruition as the LDC issues are well-captured in the outcome documents of major UN Conferences and Summits held recently.

My heartfelt thanks go to the representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their tireless efforts in co-organising this meeting. I thank the Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Foreign Secretary for their leadership and initiative.

We count on their continued engagement in supporting the development efforts of LDCs, and ensuring that the broad messages discussed here will be taken forward.

My thanks also go to the UN Office in Bangladesh for providing critical assistance and logistical support.

I am also grateful to the generous contribution of Switzerland and Norway to the LDC Trust Fund, which has enabled the organization of this meeting.

Finally, allow me also to convey my appreciation to my colleagues from my own office, OHRLLS, for their dedication and assiduous efforts, which have contributed in no small measure to the success of this meeting.

My thanks also go to those who work behind the scenes, conference services staff and interpreters, all of whom greatly contributed to the success of the event.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To conclude, I wish you all a safe journey back home. I thank you for your attention, and I thank you for your wonderful contributions.