



## BANGLADESH FOOD SECURITY INVESTMENT FORUM 2010

26–27 May 2010 • Pan Pacific Sonargaon • Dhaka

**Inaugural Session**  
**26 May 2010 • Dhaka, Bangladesh**

**Address by**  
**Dr. Muhammad Abdur Razzaque, Honourable Minister,**  
**Ministry of Food and Disaster Management**  
**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**

Chief Guest, Sheikh Hasina, Hon'ble Prime Minister  
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

**Special Guests:**

**Begum Matia Chowdhury**, Honourable Minister  
Ministry of Agriculture

**Mr. Md. Abdul Latif Biswas**, Honourable Minister  
Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock

**Dr. Rajiv Shah**, Administrator, United States Agency for International Development

**Guest of Honour**, Mr. Hiroyuki Konuma, Assistant Director General and Regional  
Representative for Asia and the Pacific, FAO

**Guest of Honour**, Dr. David Nabarro, UN Special Representative for Food Security and  
Nutrition

**Mr. Barun Dev Mitra**, Secretary, Food Division

**Dr. Shenggen Fan**, Director General, IFPRI

**Dr. M. K. Mujeri**, Director General, BIDS

**My colleagues** from different Ministries  
Diplomats, Dignitaries, Distinguished Guests and Participants  
Representatives from the Media  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning to you all!

It is indeed a privilege for me to be able to attend and chair the inaugural session of the 'Bangladesh Food Security Investment Forum 2010'. You all know by this time that this international Forum is being organized by Food Division, Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh in collaboration with partners. At the very outset, I would like to gratefully acknowledge the technical support offered by International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) and Food and Agricultural

Organization of the United Nations (UN-FAO) in a very short notice and financial support provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and others.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**, our Chief Guests, Hon'ble Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, daughter of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will give her visionary speech after me. Her guidance has always been the inspiration for all of us in the Government. Under her able leadership we achieved food self-sufficiency in 1999-2000 and with the same spirit we would reinvigorate agriculture and food security in future.

**Distinguished Participants and Guests**, let me begin with recalling few issues of global and regional food security situation and link that with Bangladesh scenario. We are aware of the estimate of FAO that the number of undernourished worldwide reached 1.02 billion in 2009. This represents, in FAO's language, more hungry people than at any time since 1970 and a worsening of the unsatisfactory trends that were present even before the economic crisis. The World Food Summit target of reducing the number of undernourished people by half to no more than 420 million by 2015 will not be reached if the trends continue.

I would like to remind you the FAO projection on global supply and prices for 2009-10. The global food supply projection for 2009-10 is 2286 million metric ton, 1.5 percent up from last year and similar to the record level of 2008. However, much will depend on climatic conditions in the coming months. The quantity fluctuates over the years-globally and regionally. Some countries have continued their restriction of export since 2007. International cereal prices have declined in the past months and are below their levels of a year ago reflecting ample cereal supplies in 2009/10. In developing countries, however, food prices remain above the pre-crisis level of early 2008, negatively affecting access to food of vulnerable populations. Despite record or bumper 2009 cereal harvests in many LIFDCs, food difficulties persist in 29 countries worldwide. The prices, projected supply and trade policy regime of exporting countries have persistently been posing volatility and uncertainty of global food market. Global Economic down turn has also been having impacts on our exports and remittances.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**, we are from a region which, in spite of steady economic growth in the past two decades, houses about 40 percent of the world's poor and 35% of the world's under-nourished. We have enormous challenges left although we demonstrated a decent economic growth accompanied by commendable performance in the agricultural sector in the last couple of decades. The production shortfall resulting from natural disasters in India and the Phillipines has impacted our accessibility to the international rice market.

At the country level, although we have shown impressive performance in many of the social indicators, we are facing the challenge of population growth, although came down to below 1.4% it has led us to be the most densely populated countries in the world. The most emerging challenge, as you will hear from the Hon'ble Prime Minister, is to adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change, a problem not created by us, but we are the victims. Apart from those, we have deteriorating access to natural resources, vulnerability to price shocks and persistent poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition. We need to invest considerable resources to address these challenges.

The food grain production, which is now to the tune of over 33 million MT, tripled since the independence in 1971. Our achieved surplus in food grain production did not sustain in the subsequent years. The Government, at its present tenure, has resorted to bring back the trend of agriculture growth on track-from 3.2% in 2007-08 to 4.6% in 2008-09. But the production of

wheat, pulses, oilseeds, vegetables, fruits, milk and meats still remains below the actual requirements.

On the access front, we still see increasing number of poor, widening income and consumption inequality-the spatial vulnerability pockets. The volatility and uncertainty of world food market keeps us in fear of deteriorating access during shocks. Significant improvements in consumption and nutrition have also been made, although children and women still suffer from higher levels of malnutrition as compared to WHO cut off levels. That means, outcomes of the growth have not yet been fully harnessed.

Many have explored the causes. I suppose, the papers that are being presented in this Forum will have detail findings. But I like to point out a couple of issues. In my view, the major impediments have been i) limited flow of investment to real sector of the economy which has enormous potentials for employment generation; and ii) reduction of investment, especially ODA to broad agriculture which is crucial for pro-poor growth. In addition, our own development efforts are being wasted by climate change impacts: temperature stresses, droughts, floods, cyclones, tidal surges and submergence, salinity intrusion etc. of increasing frequencies and intensities.

The global food crisis has made us learn few lessons. From the uncertainty of food import and reduction of food aid to around 0.1 million MT from 1.0-1.5 million tons earlier, we learnt the urgency of increasing domestic food production through increased investment in agriculture. It has also shown us the essence of strengthening regional and bi-lateral cooperation between countries to face emergencies.

In view of this, the present Government, in its 2009-10 budgets, attached top priority to facilitate domestic food production, increase capacity of PFDS to respond to shocks and support pro-poor growth. The Government's stimulus packages for the agriculture sector include: making availability of inputs, reducing the prices of non-urea fertilizer and diesel, enhancing irrigation, increasing allocations for the recapitalization of state-owned agricultural banks, provisioning increased remunerative prices to farmers and allocating fund for research. We increased the allocation to Social Safety Net Programs (SSNPs) taking 17% of total government expenditure. But the issue is that the SSNPs do not cover all the poor yet. A sizeable number is left excluded. This means we need more money although we are already overburdened. So, we would urge the development partners' to extend support to increasing coverage and effectiveness of SSNPs.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**, the present Government of Bangladesh has come to power with a 'Charter for Change' illustrated in its 'Vision 2021', which envisages, among others, self-sufficiency in food production by 2012, achievement of MDG-1 by 2017 at the latest and reduction of absolute poverty to 15% by 2021. In line with its vision and mission, the present Government has intensified support to food security programs as mentioned earlier. The National Food Policy and its Plan of Action and the PRSP outline the comprehensive strategies and actions for improving food security in the country. These are country-led plans formulated following participatory process involving all stakeholders. So they deserve development partners' support for implementation.

Especially in the context of growth of population, declination and degradation of land resources and climate change impacts, we require increasing investment to agriculture especially in research to develop stress tolerant (salinity, flood and drought) varieties of crops and adopt technologies. We need to implement strategic actions to make our agriculture system efficient, sustained and resilient. We need to graduate our agriculture from subsistence to commercialization. The speech

of the Hon'ble Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Fisheries and Livestock has rightly outlined our prioritized strategies and actions in those sectors. We need to provide price incentives for domestic food producers, retain adequate public foodgrain stock to offer consumers price support during shocks and enhance food based safety nets. We need to strengthen PFDS to effectively implement the targeted programmes and to increase capacity to respond to shocks. We need to implement the prioritized actions for improving nutritional status of the people especially women and children. While the Plan of Action represents a major reference for guiding, implementing, monitoring and coordinating actions for food security in the country, this Forum is to prioritize actions and programs to make it better align with domestic and international availability of resources. I would urge the development partners to support in the implementation our prioritized actions and programmes.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,** Bangladesh endorses the principles set forth at the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005 and Accra Agenda for Action and appreciates the principles set forth at the World Food Summit 1996 and 2009, L'Aquila G-8 summit in 2009, especially those for fostering partnership for improving food security. As said earlier, we have articulated country led policies through participatory processes. Now it is the development partners' turn to align their aid policy to our country strategies and enhance co-ordination in order to achieve development results.

I hope that this Forum would achieve its objectives with the active participation of all of you. It has already earned high esteem with the presence of top policy makers of Bangladesh, high officials from our development partners, diplomats and international celebrities from Harvard, IFPRI and the World Bank who took a lot of trouble flying to Bangladesh. Your presence has enlightened us. We are much grateful to the Hon'ble Prime Minister, the Minister for Agriculture and other cabinet colleagues for their kind presence and inspiration.

My Government and I are extremely happy to organize this Forum with collaboration of development partners. I thank my colleagues in the Food Division who worked very hard to organize this event. I hope this Forum leads towards the Country Investment Plan for sustainable food security of Bangladesh.

I wish the success of the Forum and hope that with concerted efforts of all, we will see a hunger and poverty free Bangladesh in near future.

Thank you all