

Implementing Sustainable Development Goals in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to accomplish the following: to make a quick review of the notable socio-economic progress Bangladesh has achieved, particularly in recent years, citing statistical evidence as far as available; examine the relevance to Bangladesh of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in September 2015; and to discuss how Bangladesh is preparing to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, outlining the opportunities and challenges that may be faced.

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Bangladesh Marching Ahead: Reality Check

Bangladesh has done notably well in GDP growth and improvement in social indicators over the past eight years. During this period, the annual GDP growth rate has been over 6%, and, in 2015-16, it crossed 7%. In terms of US\$, the per capita income is estimated to have risen to 1,466 as of 2015-16.¹ Poverty is down to 24.8% and extreme poverty to 12.9%.² Overall, life expectancy at birth has

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¹ Finance Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Economic Review(BER) 2016, Dhaka, June 2016. p. 1 (Bangla version).

² General Economics Division (GED), Bangladesh Planning Commission, Government of Bangladesh, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Bangladesh Progress Report 2015, Dhaka, p. 21. It seems worthwhile to explain the basis of the measurement of these ratios. These ratios essentially represent income poverty because the cost of the basic needs approaches employed based on the cost of Kcal 2122 per capita/day and a small amount of money for a minimum of other basic needs (shelter, clothing, education, and health services) for poverty and a lower amount of money for the other needs keeping the cost of food intake the same for extreme poverty.

risen to an estimated 73.2 years as of 2016; it is higher for women at 74.4 years compared to 71 years for men.³

Bangladesh is one of a few noteworthy performers in terms of achieving targets under various Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The country has fulfilled a significant number of critical targets, including in respect of poverty reduction, under-five mortality rate, the prevalence of underweight children under five years of age, gender equality in primary and secondary education, the proportion of children sleeping under insecticide-treated mosquito nets, deaths caused by malaria—on time (i.e. by December 2015) or well ahead of time. The progress has been significant in respect of several others, although the goalposts have not been reached. However, it should be noted that the achievement of Bangladesh within the framework of the MDG agenda has been accomplished, by and large, using its own financial resources and based on its own plans and programmes. Very little international assistance has been received specifically for the implementation of the MDGs. Even the official development assistance (ODA) has remained more or less stagnant as a percentage of GDP for most of the MDG years (i.e. over 2000-2015), tending to decline in specific years.

However, regarding the amount of money received annually, there has been a slight tendency to increase during the last few years.⁴ In addition to significant income growth and social development, financial achievements in recent years are also significant. The annually averaged inflation rate in 2015-16 has been 5.97%, down from 6.4% in the preceding year.⁵ Such a rate of inflation is realistic in the context of a developing country like Bangladesh. The foreign exchange reserves rose to a record level of US\$ 31.2 billion on 8 September 2016.⁶ Financial inclusiveness has also made significant headway. Many non-bank financial institutions provide financial services to the poorer segments of the population and increase banking services even in rural areas. Hence, even though the banking system remains shy in rural areas and among the urban poor, credit and other financial services are received by a considerable proportion of the poor households in rural and urban areas of Bangladesh.

A succinct statement on the progress achieved by Bangladesh up to now may be made, as follows. The rural economy of Bangladesh—agriculture (crop, livestock, fishery) and non-agricultural activities—is vibrant; exports are

³ See index mundi, web: indexmundi.com, Bangladesh: Life expectancy at birth.

⁴ See Table 9.1, Trends in ODA Disbursement, 1990-91 to 2013-14, MDGs: Bangladesh Progress Report 2015, op. cit.

⁵ Source: Bangladesh Bank.

⁶ Op. cit.

increasing, particularly of RMG and leather and leather goods, pharmaceuticals, and fish. The scope is expanding for increasing export of environment-friendly jute and jute goods. Remittances by Bangladeshis working abroad have sharply increased in recent years, reaching US\$15.17 billion in 2014-15.⁷ The penetration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has also been significant in recent years, not only in urban sectors but also in rural areas and mobile banking is a booming activity throughout the country. It may also be noted that employment is increasing in rural non-agricultural and other informal activities and urban informal sectors. The RGM sector accounts for a significant size of employment, of which women account for the preponderant majority. Elaborate safety-net (social protection) programmes exist and play a pivotal role in reducing extreme poverty. As of 2016-17, the budgetary allocation to these programmes accounts for 15% of the total budget or 2.5% of the GDP.⁸ There has been a significant improvement in women's status and involvement in the economy and society. Ministry-wise, women-focused budgets are now prepared.

Bangladesh suffers from widespread environmental degradation, and the country is at the forefront of climate change impacts. Concerning both, Bangladesh has developed policy frameworks and action programmes, which are being implemented in various sectors and areas of the country, particularly in vulnerable areas and for vulnerable segments of the population. Towards stemming environmental degradation such as water pollution, air pollution and destruction of water bodies; saving rivers from encroachment; and revamping forestry, the Government has been taking various steps but not to much avail so far, and the degradation has continued unabated. Good policies and legal provisions are in existence in the country to address these issues more effectively. What is needed is a robust application of these policies and laws. About climate change, the Government of Bangladesh adopted the key policy document, Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP), in July 2009. Other relevant policies and strategies have also been developed. Further, the Government set up The Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF) in 2010; and, up to now, a total of Tk. 31,000 million has been allocated to it from the annual budgets over the past years since 2010. A significant number of projects have been or are being implemented utilising BCCTF resources.⁹

Bangladesh is also participating actively in international climate change

⁷ Bangladesh Economic Review 2016, op.cit., p. 70 (Table 6.2).

⁸ A M A Muhith, Budget Speech 2016-17, Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh, June 2016.

⁹ See the website of the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust (BCCT), Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of Bangladesh.

negotiations, focusing on the demand for a drastic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by the developed countries in particular; and for international support in terms of financing and technology transfer, primarily for adaptive activities but also for appropriate mitigation activities in the developing countries, particularly the least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS). Bangladesh has so far received minimal financial support for climate action. Bangladesh set up a Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund (BCCRF) in 2011, but only about US\$190 million was pledged to it by bilateral donors, of which about US\$130 million was disbursed, and about US\$87 million utilised so far.¹⁰ Some international financial support has been received for disaster management and particular environment and climate change research and actions, but all of these do not add up to a very significant amount. On the other hand, funds needed for climate actions in Bangladesh run into billions of US\$.

Sustainable Development Defined

Overall, the data and analyses presented above show that Bangladesh is poised for take-off in economic terms and social development. Understandably, there are challenges to be addressed in this context, some of which will be discussed later at appropriate places. As indicated above, the country is also keenly pursuing climate actions to protect the environment and reduce the impacts and risks of climate change. At the same time, there is an increasing focus on the human being as both end and means of development. Thus, there exists in Bangladesh a basic conceptual framework for sustainable development, which is defined as a socially agreeable and environmentally sound economic growth, centring around the human being.¹¹

Equity is at the core of sustainable development from both intra-generational and inter-generational points of view.¹² Then, of course, with intra-generational equity, there are significant issues to address, including the preponderant socio-economic-political inequality or social exclusion, gender inequality within countries, and international inequality (inequality among countries).

¹⁰ Source: BCCT, op. cit.

¹¹ Agenda 21 was adopted in 1992 Rio (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) United Nations Conference of Environment and Development, commonly known as Earth Summit. The definition is reiterated in *The Future We Want*, the outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference held in Rio in 2012.

¹² In *Our Common Future*, the 1987 Brundtland Commission (i.e. UN World Commission on Environment and Development) Report, sustainable development has been defined with reference to equity as 'sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'

Moving On: From MDGs to SDGs

The eight MDGs were picked, focusing on critical issues faced by developing countries, clearly disregarding the Millennium Declaration. This Declaration was a political document adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2000. There is no narrative invoking human and social values behind the MDGs so that these goals were not construed to generate a process of development based on a set of fundamental values and principles. The MDG goals and targets aim to address different population segments' deficits and sufferings concerning poverty, hunger, health services, education, gender equality, and environmental issues. On the other hand, the Millennium Declaration invokes fundamental values and principles, including human freedom; accountability; solidarity; tolerance; respect for nature; and shared responsibility for peace, security, and disarmament; human rights for all; protecting the environment, and eradicating poverty and protecting the vulnerable. Given that these values were not built into the MDG programme, inequality has steeply increased in most MDG implementing countries, despite progress in various MDG targets.

One other characteristic of the MDGs may be mentioned. Currently, intolerance and lack of solidarity permeate global and national orders, environmental degradation has continued unabated, and climate change intensifies. There is little to show concerning the shared responsibility of the global community towards establishing orderly progress of the global society under conditions of peace and security. It was not a requirement in the MDG agenda, as it was formulated, to address these issues. It was, in fact, a dependent agenda. It was to be implemented by the developing countries with financial and technological support from the developed countries.

However, the MDG agenda caught the imagination of the governments, civil societies and other stakeholders in the MDG implementing countries because these goals and the targets under them were formulated in a straightforward, simple, and easy to understand manner. Also, this has been the first global agenda to be implemented as such.

However, the Agenda constructed, focusing on the SDGs, differs from the MDG Agenda in certain fundamental respects. First of all, unlike the MDGs, this new Agenda is a transformative one, as is indicated by its title "Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." (henceforth 2030 Agenda). Secondly, it is an Agenda for all the countries of the world while, as pointed out before, the MDGs were not. However, indeed, the priorities relating to the SDGs may be different for different countries, depending on their levels of development and circumstances. Thirdly, there is a narrative behind this Agenda, which spells out the fundamental values and principles on which it is anchored—

and as seen, there was none behind the MIDS. Thus, within the SDG framework, a world is envisaged where there will be "universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination; of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity; and of equal opportunity permitting the full realisation of human potential and contribution to shared prosperity. A world that invests in its children and in which every child grows up free from violence and exploitation. A world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social, and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed. A just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met."¹³

Based on these fundamental values and principles, it has been envisioned in the 2030 Agenda that no one will be left behind; sustainable development will be at the core of socio-economic transformation; economies will be transformed for jobs, and inclusive growth; peace and effective, open, and accountable institutions will be built for all; and new global partnerships will be forged to carry forward the 2030 Agenda.

A Brief Review of the Relevance of the SDGs for Bangladesh

The 2030 Agenda was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on 25 September 2015. It is now under implementation in all the countries of the world. The Agenda consists of a total of 17 goals and 169 targets. Box 1 shows the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Indicators to measure progress with the targets are being identified internationally. However, the indicators a particular country will be using should be determined based on their economic, social, and environmental realities and circumstances, both within the country and faced externally.

As said earlier, the priority ordering of the 17 SDGs as well as the targets under them will vary from country to country, depending on their internal and external circumstances and levels of development. For Bangladesh, I would suggest that the following four SDGs should be accorded top priority. Goal1: End poverty in all its forms; Goal2: End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; and Goals5 and 10: Achieve gender equality, empower all women and girls, and Reduce inequality within and among countries. All other goals and targets will come into play through organic linkages provided by the human centricity (leave no one behind) of the Agenda and the

¹³ United Nations, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015, para 8 of the Preamble.

fundamental values and principles on which it is anchored.

Despite unparalleled scientific and technological advancement and unprecedented global wealth creation in recent times, 836 million people

Box 1: 17 Sustainable Development Goals

Goal 1	End poverty in all its forms everywhere
Goal 2	End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
Goal 3	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
Goal 4	Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning
Goal 5	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
Goal 6	Ensure access to water and sanitation for all
Goal 7	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
Goal 8	Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all
Goal 9	Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation
Goal 10	Reduce inequality within and among countries
Goal 11	Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
Goal 12	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
Goal 13	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
Goal 14	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources
Goal 15	Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss
Goal 16	Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies and establish accountable and inclusive institutions
Goal 17	Revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development

worldwide are still poor, having to make do with a per capita/day income of less than PPP\$1.25.¹⁴ Also, about 795 million people around the world still do not have enough food, in terms of quality or quantity or both, to eat; and 780 million of them are in developing countries.¹⁵ In Bangladesh, despite praiseworthy success achieved in reducing poverty and hunger, about 40 million people (24.8% of the total population) are still poor and about 20 million (12.9%) extremely poor, based on poverty measurement with reference to the cost of basic needs.¹⁶

A few statistics relating to the inadequacy of food intake in Bangladesh may be shown here. About 41% of children under the age of five years are chronically undernourished, and they are stunted (too short for their age); one-third of children aged six months to less than five years of age are anaemic; some 16% of under-five children are wasted (low weight-for-height); about 40% of school-aged children are iron deficient, and loss of productivity due to undernourishment accounts for about US\$ one billion and even more is incurred in healthcare costs.¹⁷ Income inequality is acute (GINI around 0.45 and income share of the poorest 5% being around 0.75% while that of the richest 5% around 25%), but it has been more or less unchanged in recent years.¹⁸ Social inequality is worse as the poor have little access to policymaking and implementation processes. Not infrequently, they are deprived of their legitimate economic and social rights. Therefore, elimination of poverty and hunger and reduction of inequality must be the top priorities in Bangladesh in implementing the 2030 Agenda. When more and more poor people are mainstreamed in the socio-economic transformation process, not only poverty and hunger reduction will take place, but, simultaneously, there will also be contributions to disparity reduction and GDP

¹⁴ UNDP, Human Development Report 2015, New York, p. 74. There are still 836 million poor people in the world is an affront on human ingenuity that has scaled such mindboggling heights in scientific and technological advancement and wealth creation. However, it should be noted that poverty reduction since 1990, when the number of poor people was 1.9 billion, is remarkable.

¹⁵ UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015, p.8.

¹⁶ See endnote 2 of this paper.

¹⁷ See World Food Programme (WFP), '10 Facts about Hunger in Bangladesh', 20 April 2015. web: <<http://m.wfp.org/stories/10-facts-about-hunger-bangladesh>>

¹⁸ Bangladesh Economic Review 2016, op.cit., p.197 (Bangla version). 2010 UNDP Human Development Report estimated 1.7 billion people to be MPI poor and 1.4 billion incomes (PPP\$1.25) poor in the 104 countries included in that assessment, implying MPI poverty to be 21% higher than income poverty. 19. This difference in the poverty levels, measured following multidimensional and income poverty approaches, is based on MPI measurement using three dimensions (education, health, and living standard) and ten indicators. If more dimensions and indicators are used, the difference may be more extensive.

increase.

While target 1.1 under Goal1 proposes eradication of extreme poverty everywhere, measured concerning PPP\$1.25 poverty line, target 1.2 invokes multiple dimensions of poverty and proposes reduction at least by half the current proportion of multidimensional poor men, women, and children of all ages. The second target refers to the prevailing realities as there are multiple dimensions to human living and, hence, to poverty. Income alone cannot and does not tell the whole story.

The UNDP has been publishing multidimensional poverty indices (MPIs) for countries around the world since 2010. As it takes into account multiple indicators, multidimensional poverty is understandably higher than income poverty; and, as of 2010, the estimated number of multidimensionally poor people is 21% higher than the number of income-poor people in the 104 countries covered in that year.¹⁹

Not only that the MPI reflects reality more closely, but also it is conducive in the context of policy and programme development or adjustments as it pinpoints which aspect(s) of the living conditions that a particular group of poor people or an impoverished family or even a particular poor individual suffer(s) from. This MPI is the aggregation of the values of indicators/dimensions included. A particular group, for example, maybe deficient or poor in respect of food intake, children's education, access to electricity, access to clean drinking water, and institutional support for their particular economic activity. These issues can then be addressed in specific terms for the specific groups.²⁰

The adoption of the MPI approach for poverty measurement and poverty action by individual countries would give them a basis for more focused and relevant poverty action for different poverty groups.

Bangladesh has initiated a pilot project to field-test how best to measure multidimensional poverty, focusing on dimensions and indicators to be included and weights against them for aggregation, data generation and analysis. It is at a reasonably advanced stage of completion. One expects poverty measurement in Bangladesh will soon be conducted multidimensionally, which will be helpful for

¹⁹ For more on this and other references, see Q K Ahmad and Baqui Khalily, "Measuring Multidimensional Poverty Based on Evidence from Programmed Initiative of Monga Eradication (PRIME) in North-Western Bangladesh" in Q K Ahmad and Shafi Ahmed (eds.), *Bangladesh's Development: Some Issues and Perspectives—Essays in Honor of A M A Muhith*, published by Palok Publishers under the auspices of Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP), and Dhaka School of Economics (DScE), Dhaka, June 2016.

²⁰ On this one may consult PKSF website: www.pksf.org

more focused and specified poverty action for variously deprived populations.

As soon as poverty is (reduction/eradication of which is the topmost priority-SDG for Bangladesh, as proposed by the present author) is recognised to be multidimensional, health issues (SDG3); education (SDG4); water and sanitation (SDG6); access to energy (SDG7); growth, employment, and decent work (SDG8); combating of climate change (SDG13); and sustainable management of forest, combating of desertification, halting and reversing of land degradation and halting of biodiversity loss (SDG15) become crucially relevant. The goal of hunger eradication (present author's 2nd top priority-SDG for Bangladesh) reinforces the need to pursue the SDGs as mentioned above steadfastly. The goal of inequality reduction (present author's 3rd top priority-SDG for Bangladesh) also calls for effective implementation of the above mentioned SDGs.

Achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls (present author's 4th top priority-SDG) requires that, in implementing the above mentioned SDGs as well as in the case of all other SDGs, women and girls must feature appropriately, adequately, and effectively in both the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and equitably sharing of the outcomes thereof.

Relating to the country's socio-economic take-off, as discussed earlier and which is necessary for sustained poverty and hunger reduction and beyond poverty sustainable development, it is critical to give due attention to infrastructure development and upgrading (transportation, gas, electricity, ports); support and facilitate innovations; promote sustainable industrialisation suited to the existing and emerging relevant circumstances (SDG9). About take-off, another key area for particular focus is human capability development through quality education, appropriate skill training, and necessary health services, which has been noted earlier to be directly relevant for poverty and hunger eradication. Special attention needs to be given to young people. Bangladesh is now passing through a period with a huge potentiality of the demographic dividend to be realised. About half the potential economically active population is young. If this potential powerhouse of human capability can be developed and put to proper use, that will be a potent force strengthening the process of the country's socio-economic take-off and sustainable, robust forward march along a high trajectory.

There are opportunities and challenges in cities, where both much affluence and substantial poverty coexist. Poverty reduction and development actions in urban areas, particularly in large cities, hold great importance in the context of sustainable poverty reduction and development in the country. Some 65% of the national income is generated in the urban sector in Bangladesh, and almost 40% in Dhaka city alone. The challenges in the cities include pressure on social

services (education, health services, water supply, electricity, sanitation and other municipal services, transportation) due to unplanned rapid urbanisation and fast-growing numbers of city dwellers; sprawling slums with much poverty; very congested settlements. Opportunities include the availability of good educational institutions, quality health service facilities; issues surrounding the safety of life and property; marketing facilities; and linkage opportunities for mutual benefit between different economic activities and professional groups.

The issues of safety, inclusiveness, resilience and sustainability in the cities are recognised as SDG11. In implementing the 2030 Agenda in Bangladesh, therefore, appropriate policy planning and commensurate actions should be carried out to take advantage of the above-listed and other urban opportunities and effectively address the above-listed and other challenges for sustainable urban development, contributing significantly to poverty and hunger reduction/elimination, inequality reduction, and accelerated socio-economic progress in Bangladesh.

The relevance of SDG12 (Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns) in Bangladesh can be explained as follows. Sustainability of production requires access to factors of production (notably, raw materials and other inputs, finance, skilled managerial and technical personnel) timely and adequately as well as to necessary infrastructural and marketing facilities. These requirements relate to agriculture, rural-non-agricultural activities, small and medium enterprises, and modern sectors. A major focus should be on productivity growth as productivity is low in Bangladesh in most sectors. Improved technologies and skills are essential requirements for enhanced productivity. These and other needs should be addressed based on the existing and emerging realities assessed through appropriate studies.

In the context of consumption, while inadequate access is a significant issue for the downtrodden, food quality is a major issue for all. Adulterated food has become a menacing health hazard in Bangladesh. It must be addressed effectively through both unflinching applications of law and widespread awareness-raising among all population segments.

On SDG14 (conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources), Bangladesh has a significant interest in marine resources, given that it has a long coastal belt and a significant stake in the Bay of Bengal. Beyond that, it may not play many roles in the context of conserving oceans and seas, but it should remain watchful on how things shape up in this regard.

SDG16 (promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies) provides the overall guiding principle. A fully inclusive society means that no one is left behind. For an orderly transformation of society, every member of that society should enjoy

their human rights and freedoms, secure their legitimate shares of development benefits, and participate meaningfully in the process of socio-economic-political transformation of society. This can materialise in a society that is just and peaceful, with the rule of law prevailing.

SDG17 is about the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. While individual countries have the pre-eminent responsibility for implementing the SDGs, the international community also has a collective responsibility for effective implementation of the Agenda as a global compact. It is essential to ensure a fair international trade regime, with some affirmative facilities for the LDCs and financial and technological assistance to the developing countries to meet the ability gaps they face in these regards, considering the optimal mobilisation of their domestic resources. What is essential is to forge these partnerships based on sovereign mutuality, fairness in the determination of responsibilities, and proper implementation and joint monitoring of the agreed actions of the parties entering into a partnership.

Towards 2030 Agenda Implementation in Bangladesh

This section outlines the action areas and directions in implementing the 2030 Agenda in Bangladesh.

- The Agenda seeks to bring about a societal transformation, equitably including everyone. To implement such an agenda, a high level of political commitment is vital.
 - √ In Bangladesh, a strong political commitment does exist. Buoyed by the country's exceptional performance in implementing the MDGs, the Government of Bangladesh actively participated in the formulation of the 2030 Agenda. The civil society input into that process from Bangladesh, often working in tandem with the Government, is also noteworthy.
 - √ The political commitment to the 2030 Agenda in Bangladesh has grown as a necessary concomitant of that involvement, which, in turn, has arisen from the Government's commitment to the eradication of poverty and, beyond poverty, sustainable development including all citizens of the country in the process.
 - √ A reflection of the strong political commitment of the Government of Bangladesh led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to the 2030 Agenda is that a Committee on Sustainable Development Goals: Implementation and Review was set up in the office of the Prime Minister under the Chairmanship of the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister on 25 November 2015, only two months after the Agenda was adopted by the

United Nations and Bangladesh signing into it and more than a month before it came into force on 1 January 2016. In about only ten months, the Committee has accomplished an appreciable amount of basic work.

√ The Committee has been working on indicators to measure progress against targets, specifying tasks to be carried out under different SDGs, and identifying which ministry or agency would perform what responsibilities and which tasks. It is also assessing the potentiality of domestic resource mobilisation for implementing the 2030 Agenda. The flip side of this exercise gives the estimates of resources to seek from external sources through global partnerships. The Committee's work will undoubtedly facilitate effective implementation of the Agenda.

- In preparing the way forward, the challenge or possible setback or backward slide in any respect must always be kept in perspective. For example, some people who have moved above the poverty line may face the prospect of falling back to poverty due to an impending natural disaster. In this context, a mechanism and an analytical framework need to be put in place for identifying such a possibility and putting in place, in response, action programmes to prevent it from occurring if possible or reduce risks and impacts thereof in case of its occurrence and to take action to recoup the situation as quickly as possible it does occur. In this case, prevention by human action is not an option, but steps need to be taken to reduce risks in the first place and then, if and when it does happen, undertake appropriate activities to enable the people concerned to recover as quickly as possible from the socio-economic setback suffered by them. Moreover, there should be ongoing action programmes to reduce disaster risks.
- To maximise benefits from the available resources and human and institutional capabilities, importance-ordering of the SDGs and priority-ordering of the tasks to be undertaken to the targets under different SDGs should be worked out. However, once such a plan is prepared and used to guide SDG implementation actions, it should be reviewed and revised periodically, considering the experiences gathered and the available new knowledge and analyses of ground realities that may be changing.
- In addition to the central government's critical role, local governments can and should play a major role in mobilising local resources and facilitating and supporting local actions under various SDGs. However, the Government alone cannot implement the 2030 Agenda successfully. The participation of all other stakeholders such as civil society, the private sector, education and skill development sectors, the financial sectors, and the people at large through community-based organisations is essential. For contributions from

all these actors to be marshalled towards a successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda, there needs to be effective coordination among government ministries and other agencies, between the central and local governments, and between the Government and all other stakeholders and actors.

- Not infrequently, coordination gaps bedevil effective implementation of policies and programmes in Bangladesh. It is, therefore, essential to develop a robust coordination mechanism so that the best possible results are obtained through coordinated actions of all the actors, which can ensure the best possible utilisation of the available resources towards achieving the targets set.

In addition to the need for improving coordination, there are several challenges to address in the process of 2030 Agenda implementation, which includes the following.

- In the 2030 Agenda itself, it has been recognised that a successful implementation of the Agenda, a data revolution is necessary. Detailed data on the ground realities are needed for adequately designing action programmes and measuring progress against targets. In Bangladesh, gaps are daunting in this regard. A research and data gathering and analysis programme, keeping in perspective the 2030 Agenda implementation plans and guidelines developed, needs to be designed with proper prioritisation and implemented. This is a critical action area for which external resources may be tapped in a major way.
- Another area of action is to develop, revamp or strengthen institutions congruent with the policies and strategies adopted for 2030 Agenda implementation. This is surely a complex task, but one that needs serious attention. The Agenda itself recognises the importance of policy and institutional congruence for its proper implementation. It may also serve a useful purpose if assigning responsibilities and tasks are rearranged—such as giving local governments a major role in local actions.
- Monitoring of the implementation of the SDG action programmes focusing on the concrete results being achieved is a must to understand the extent and quality of the outcomes regarding the targets set. Thorough monitoring is also important for identifying if there are any mission drifts, undesirable episodes, existing or emerging bottlenecks, inefficiencies and so on, enabling the authorities to undertake corrective measures.
- A major challenge is a large-scale need for human capacity development and improvement at all levels of society and human action areas. The essential means to this end includes education, skill development, and health services. In all these areas, there have been significant advancements in the country in

recent years. However still, there are major gaps. Functionally educated (meaning reading, writing, understanding, expressing, communicating, and accounting skills are at a level that gives the persons concerned a respectable level of abilities and confidence) proportion of the adult population is perhaps about 50%, skill training covers a negligible proportion of even the youth segment of the population, and affordable and quality primary health services remain way short about the goal of universal primary healthcare coverage. Illiterate people need to be educated and trained. The literates and those with higher levels of education need appropriate skill training in their respective chosen fields. Higher-level functionaries in all sectors need exposure nationally and internationally, as the case may be. How best to develop and improve the human capabilities, over the coming years, at various levels and in different areas of human endeavour must be appropriately planned concerning the projected requirements over the years, derived from the planned 2030 Agenda implementation processes. However, besides this process, many more skilled people will be needed in other areas of human endeavour in the country, which must also be kept in perspective in planning human capability development and improvement in Bangladesh.

- Financing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is going to be a considerable challenge. It is expected that individual countries will mobilise domestic resources to the maximum extent possible for implementing this Agenda. This would require improved public revenue collection mechanisms to eliminate evasion and leakages and extend the tax net to cover the potential taxpayers who are not paying taxes now. The Government has been taking steps in terms of, for example, simplifying the tax payment procedure, the introduction of online payment facilities and encouraging people to use these, according to recognition to major taxpayers, and raising awareness through tax-fairs and other means about the liability of those who have taxable incomes to pay their taxes. Efforts should be strengthened to identify tax evaders and bring them to book to discourage others from traversing this path. Then, other sources of funding that should be tapped for implementing the Agenda include civil society and community-based organisations, the private corporate sector, people of small means interested in micro-enterprises, foreign direct investment (FDI), and official development assistance (ODA) from the developed countries.

√ Many civil society and community-based organisations were enthusiastically active in promoting MDGs and are already gearing up to play a part in 2030 Agenda implementation. Although these organisations

- may not raise many funds for tasks to be undertaken, they can undertake awareness-raising, monitoring, and review activities to help effectively utilise funds and focused implementation of the Agenda.
- √ The private sector, particularly the corporate segment, needs to prominently because of its prominent role in the nation's economic progress. The private investors have a responsibility to ensure that their undertakings are managed to contribute to economic growth that is socially agreeable and environmentally sound. By so doing, they will be contributing to a sustainable future of their own industries and businesses as well. The Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mechanism, which has been in place for quite some years, maybe revamped for utilisation to mobilise the private sector to contribute to sustainable development in coordination with the Government and other stakeholders.
 - √ If facilitated and supported, people of small means, mainly rural areas, can mobilise their own funds and generate income, employment, and savings. They may be encouraged to use whatever savings they may have or whatever funds they may be able to raise by extending credits to them for the additional funds required for undertaking micro-scale enterprises—in which total requirement is, by and large, the equivalent of US\$5,000 or US\$10,000. Even if they cannot initially invest from their own sources and the fundamental requirement is made available in terms of credit, they soon start to improve their economic conditions and generate savings for investment. However, only making money available to them is not enough. They must also be simultaneously provided with assistance in securing market information, skill training, assistance in accessing appropriate technologies, and assistance in marketing products. The experience of the Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) is that there is tremendous interest among large numbers of rural people around the country who, if assisted as indicated above, take up such activities.²¹
 - √ Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Bangladesh is relatively low. It has, however, tended to increase slightly recently, topping US\$2 billion in 2015. To attract more FDIs, adequate attention must be given to ensuring political stability, improving the business environment, and improving infrastructural facilities such as transportation, ports, gas and electricity supplies, and timely disposal of the required official actions.
 - √ Bangladesh should strengthen efforts to establish beneficial global partnerships to meet the resource gaps after maximum possible mobilisation of domestic resources in respect of ODA. The principle of common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities

provide a sound basis for these partnerships to be worked out. Because, in the interest of effective 2030 Agenda implementation in the developing countries, particularly the LDCs and SIDS, the additional financial resources, appropriate technologies, and capacity enhancing support that they may need should be provided by the international community. This is also a must from the point of view of reducing international inequality, i.e. inequality among countries.

- Corruption is pervasive in Bangladesh and is another major challenge in the context of 2030 Agenda implementation. It causes siphoning off and wastage of resources, delays in decision making and implementation, and, not infrequently, makes for wrong targeting. It may be different in nature, scale, and methods used, but corruption is worldwide. It is also a much talked about subject in Bangladesh and also internationally. In Bangladesh, there are policies and laws against corruption; and there is also a dedicated agency, Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), to take action against corruption. However, all this has so far been of little avail in practice in reducing corruption to any significant extent. More focused, purposeful, honest and coordinated action is essential for achieving results in meaningfully reducing corruption in the first instance while striving to increase successes over time. SDG16 calls for promoting just, peaceful and inclusive societies and establishing accountable and inclusive institutions. This SDG should be accorded the high importance it deserves in the context of steadily taking the sustainable development agenda forward.
- Terrorism is an international menace that kills and maims people who are often innocent. It can hinder the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through its destabilising efforts. Needed anti-terrorist activities claim resources that might otherwise have been available for economic and social purposes. In Bangladesh, the Government policy stance is zero tolerance in respect of terrorism. From time to time, however, terrorist activities of one sort or another have taken place in the country. However, the Government's stern action in recent times, particularly during the last several months, has reduced the possibility of terrorist activities taking place in the country to a minimum now. All the known terrorist groups operating in Bangladesh are now subdued by decisive policy actions and are under elaborate surveillance. However, continuous vigilance is essential to prevent likely terrorist acts. At the same time, it is also necessary to watch out for any new terrorist groups or individuals who may try to raise their heads from within the country or without and take necessary action to nip any such possibility in the bud.

Concluding Remarks

Having done notably well in terms of economic growth and social development and achieving a high level of success concerning the overall implementation of the MDGs, in an accelerated manner in recent years, Bangladesh is now poised for moving on to a higher trajectory of development. The 2030 Agenda will help galvanise and strengthen the process. In this paper, a reality check has been made of the successes achieved, the SDGs have been reviewed about their relevance to and priorities for Bangladesh, and action areas and directions for effective 2030 Agenda implementation have been outlined.

Indeed, in any economy or society moving forward, there may be some unresolved problems outstanding from the past; and other new problems may also arise from time to time. It is essential to seriously address the outstanding problems and regularly watch through an appropriate review mechanism to identify any new problems threatening to arise. In the case of the possible new problems, the endeavour should be made to identify them in advance and prevent them or put in place policies, and strategies to address them effectively should any or all of them arise.