



Bangladesh

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Opening Statement

by

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Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the UN
and the President of the Executive Board of UNICEF

at the First Regular Session 2010 of the UNICEF Executive Board
(held from 12-14 January 2010)

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Opening statement by H.E Dr A. K Abdul Momen, President of UNICEF Executive Board and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN at the First Regular Session of UNICEF Executive Board on January 12, 2010

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Executive Director of UNICEF,
Ladies and gentlemen

It is a great honor for my country and for me to serve as the President of the UNICEF Executive Board for 2010 and I would like to thank the members of the Board for their trust and confidence in me. I express my special thanks and gratitude to the Asian Group which has nominated me as their representative to the Bureau thereby giving me an opportunity to serve the Executive Board as its President for the current year.

Let me at the very outset thank H.E. Ambassador Oumar Daou, the outgoing President and Permanent Representative of Mali for his able leadership and his important contribution to the work of the Executive Board during the past year. I would also like to thank the outgoing members of the Bureau, Ambassador Léo Mérorès of Haiti, Ambassador Simona Miculescu of Romania, Minister Takeshi Osuga of Japan and my own predecessor, Ambassador Ismat Jahan. Dear colleagues, I shall continue to count on your support and guidance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is also a special privilege for me to pay particular tribute to the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Ann M. Veneman and her team for their dynamism, expertise, skill and for their commitment that allowed UNICEF to enhance its leadership role in the area of promoting the well-being of children and protecting their rights throughout the world. At this challenging time, I am saddened to note that the Executive Director Ms Veneman will be leaving us and will not be with us throughout this year. During her tenure as the Executive Director, Ms Veneman has shown outstanding leadership and dedication to the cause of the organization. I would like to echo the comments made by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and I quote:

Ms Veneman has fulfilled her mandate with immense dedication, and I have been impressed by her extraordinary energy and determination to improve children's health, education and well-being around the world. Under her leadership, UNICEF has become a catalyst for global action to help children reach their full potential, promoting collaborations that deliver the best possible results for children based on expert knowledge, sound evidence and data. She has been a champion of UN Coherence and a strong voice for children as well as MDG implementation. Her legacy is an organization that is financially and intellectually strong and well-equipped to meet the challenges children face in the 21st century. Unquote

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please join me to wish Ms Veneman all the health, happiness, peace and prosperity in the days ahead. I believe that a befitting tribute to Ms Veneman would be for us to continue the good works that she and her colleagues have started in UNICEF. This year we have the opportunity to

build on the progress made over the past years to fully utilize the potential of the UNICEF by providing strategic guidance and oversight. We will do so by extending our all-out support to the UNICEF management to enable us to face the emerging challenges through adoption of appropriate approaches and new initiatives. In fact, we need to build on our successes and tackle the challenges at hand to promote a stronger, more assertive, more cost effective result oriented UNICEF. Our main challenge is to further strengthen the quality and relevance of the work of the organization by accomplishing all the tasks that have been underway and some of which will be considered during the current session.

Distinguished delegates, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,
My country attaches high importance to the work of the UNICEF. I personally had the experience of having support in 1992 from the UNICEF in my effort to end trafficking and to rehabilitate victims of camel jockeys, young boys aged between 3 and 5 years. As a pro-active Member of the organization, Bangladesh always assisted UNICEF in fulfilling its mandated goals and also to promote the purposes and principles of the organization in line with our principled stand on sustainable development, promotion of human rights, protection of environment, poverty eradication, protection of child's rights and the like. Despite the challenges posed by climate change, the world economic and financial meltdown as well as food insecurity, my country is, more than ever, committed to pursue its efforts in terms of contributing to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We will work together to live up to the need of the hour.

UNICEF's 2009 report on *State of the World Children* gives us a dismal picture. The report shows that even after the 20th anniversary of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (celebrated by the global community on 20 November 2009) each year almost 4 million newborn children – particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and in South Asia – die within the first month following their birth. Almost 9 million children worldwide died before their fifth birthday in 2008, and more than half-a-million women die each year from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. 4 million under-fives die each year from just three causes: diarrhea, malaria and pneumonia. The number of children out of primary school remains high at over 100 million in 2007, with more girls than boys missing out. Thus, improving maternal and neo-natal health, ensuring good nutrition and education of children is a major challenge that the international community must meet through a strong political commitment and by mobilizing the necessary resources to enhance accelerated programs and policies to ensure the survival and development of children, including their mothers.

The year 2009 has been marked by the worst global financial crisis in 80 years. The resultant global economic downturn, coupled with historically high levels of food and fuel prices, has led to concerns that poverty and under-nutrition will continue to increase and would severely affect the children. Climate and population shifts have further aggravated the increasing threat. Children are particularly vulnerable to their effects due to their physiological infancy and the sensitivity of many of the main killers of young children – including under-nutrition and vector borne diseases, including climatic conditions. Increasing evidence suggests that the world's least developed countries, which have burgeoning child populations, are likely to bear the brunt of environmental shifts. The growing correlation between civil strife and climate change is an area of particular concern for child survival and development.

However, history shows time and again that crises always offer the opportunities for change. Governments and other stakeholders such as civil society, private sector and global community, hence, can use this imposing challenge as an opportunity to renew their commitments to redouble their efforts in fulfilling the internationally agreed developments goals, in particular, the Millennium Development Goals. Six out of eight MDGs are directly linked to children. The need for achieving the MDGs, as an essential means to pursue socio-economic development, is important now than ever. The upcoming High-level Meeting on MDGs in 2010 will provide us a critical opportunity to take stock of past achievements as well as charting a course for new beginning, where the future of our children will be more secured. In these challenging times, it is increasingly clear that we need more innovative ways of doing business and, we also need renewed commitment and global participation.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At a time when the world has been beset with numerous crises, the role of an organization like UNICEF becomes especially crucial and critical. This is more so because of the constituency of the organization which is the children, the future of the humankind and the most vulnerable segment of the world population. The future of our children are seriously threatened by the increasing concerns over security, armed conflicts, the impact of global economic and financial crisis, natural disasters, unfavorable climate change, food insecurity, cross-border trafficking and modern-day slave trade. We must act now and I look forward to receiving your full support in addressing these challenges together.

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

One of major goals of the UNICEF is to help assist children to achieve literacy and primary school education. In Bangladesh, as a case in point, evidence shows that primary school drop-out rate can substantially be reduced by (i) providing \$2 a month stipend and (ii) arranging school feeding program... In addition to fulfilling the nutritional requirements, the Government of Bangladesh is now providing fortified biscuits at selected primary schools to increase school retention. The results are encouraging but given its resource constraints, it is finding difficulty to enhance its coverage. In this challenging time, UNICEF, in collaboration with relevant inter-governmental organizations, can come forward with a pilot project in selected vulnerable countries to impart minimal education to young children and provide them a hope and a dream for a meaningful living.

In fact, UNICEF's leadership can help make the lives of these children safer and meaningful in this insecure world. The Executive Board like ours should offer a venue to address the multiple dimensions and implications for poverty and sustainable development and solicit concrete initiatives to help alleviate its impact on the most vulnerable group like children. I look forward to working with all of you to continue facilitating UNICEF fulfilling its mandate by providing intergovernmental support and oversight to the organization, in accordance with the overall policy guidance of the United Nations General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We applaud UNICEF for its persistent efforts to improve the well-being of children across nations especially in the developing countries where the support is needed most. In regions like the South Asia and Africa, UNICEF has become a household name and we encourage UNICEF's

role in contributing to development outcomes at country level. We should also put on record our deepest appreciation for all the developed and developing countries including private individuals and corporations who are contributing financial resources to UNICEF.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

We all must aim at making this a fruitful and successful year. This will only be possible with proactive support and cooperation of our total membership. We are fortunate to have an experienced Secretary Ms. Kirsi Madi, and a team of committed and skilled professional staff. I believe, innovation, creativity, competition, competitiveness, motivation and participation are the engine of growth and prosperity. I am confident that with your support and combined effort and with your creativity and pro-active participation we shall be able to overcome obstacles and achieve the goals that we have set for ourselves.

Thank you all.