

**A Summary of Conclusions
Reached at
The National Seminar on Bangladesh Perspectives on Sustainable
Development Towards 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development
Dhaka, 4 September 2001**

A Seminar on **Bangladesh Perspectives on Sustainable Development Towards 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development**, jointly organized by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) and Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP), was held on 4 September 2001 in Dhaka. Special Assistant to Chief Advisor, Government of Bangladesh and Chairman of BIISS Board of Governors Mr C M Shafi Sami chaired the seminar; and BUP Chairman Dr Q K Ahmad, who was a participant in the UN DESA organized Central and South Asia Roundtable of Eminent Persons on 2002 WSSD, made the keynote presentation. Director General of BIISS Major General A M Mansur Ahmed presented the welcome address. The seminar was participated by about 100 persons, including senior government officials, former government ministers and other functionaries, academics, community leaders, business people, journalists, and others concerned.

Following the keynote presentation, lively discussions on various relevant aspects took place. The issues on which consensus was reached include the following.

- Human beings must be at the centre stage of the sustainable development process; and human capability development is the prime mover in the context of planning and implementation of sustainable development.
- Good governance, effective institutions, and recognition of cultural realities are crucial imperatives towards ensuring sustainability of development.
- In the light of concerns and imperatives of sustainable development, it is crucial that concepts and approaches to development are formulated/reformulated towards constructing a sustainable development pathway.
- Social equity needs to be promoted to ensure access of large numbers of people to resources and employment and to enlarge social choices.
- Poverty alleviation is a vital element in the shaping of the sustainable development pathway, which must be a process component. Safety nets are necessary for the most vulnerable.
- Acceleration of economic growth is crucial for poverty alleviation and national economic advancement. In this context, foreign direct investment (FDI) can play an important role. Bangladesh offers an attractive package of incentives for FDI. International cooperation in this context is necessary.

- Peace and security are necessary pre-conditions for sustainable development which, in turn, reinforces peace and security. This symbiosis is a powerful force in social transformation in the interest of all citizens and must be forged and enhanced.
- People's participation in decision making and implementation processes is crucial for sustainable development. Participatory democracy and effective local government provide necessary frameworks for the promotion of people's participation in decision making and implementation processes. Politically committed thrusts are needed for achieving wide-scale and effective people's participation.
- Market access in developed countries needs to be ensured for the exports of Bangladesh.
- Equitable south-south, regional, and international cooperation is needed to be forged for Bangladesh to minimize the dangers and take advantage of the opportunities created by globalization.
- Arsenic contamination of ground water is a major environmental and health hazard in Bangladesh. This issue must be addressed on a priority basis, for which international assistance is required.
- Projected climate change and sea level rise are likely to bring about major adverse impacts in Bangladesh. Efforts need to be mounted to make preparations to meet the challenges, particularly in the area of adaptation to climate change. Developed countries should help Bangladesh in efforts aimed at combating the dangers arising as a result of global climate change and sea level rise due to concentrated greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere, most of which emitted by the developed countries.
- Developed countries have failed in a major way to fulfil their commitments in relation to the provision of market access to the exports of developing countries, providing resources to developing countries for activities relating to climate change responses and environmental protection and enhancement, and reducing their own emissions of greenhouse gasses. Although Kyoto Protocol was adopted recently but what has been adopted is a substantially watered down version and, moreover, the USA has stayed out of it.
- The developed countries must fulfil their commitments and, also, other responsibilities that arise from the agreed principle of differentiated responsibility.
- The impacts of projected climate change and sea level rise on the water sector must be kept under review and measures should be designed and implemented, as appropriate, to combat those. Regional and international cooperation is needed in this context since water issues facing Bangladesh have major transboundary realities and concerns.

- Determined steps are needed to root out corruption, crimes, and criminalization . Strong political commitment and consensus are needed in this context.
- It has been suggested that a **Sustainable Development Commission** be established in Bangladesh to perform responsibilities relating to the formulation and implementation of a sustainable development strategy in the country.
- The government and all others concerned have been urged to participate effectively in the processes leading to the 2002 WSSD in Johannesburg as well as in the WSSD itself to make Bangladesh's case effectively about its concerns and needs - particularly those where regional and international linkages and cooperation are necessary - relating to sustainable development.

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