

UN General Assembly and Bangladesh

By Barrister Harun ur Rashid

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The sixty-fifth ordinary session opened on Tuesday, 14 September 2010, at 3 p.m. in New York. The theme of the general debate will be "Reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in global governance", as proposed by the President-elect.

Mr. Joseph Deiss of Switzerland will be the President of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

The main priorities for the session General Assembly are:

- progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),
- reform of the United Nations and
- the promotion of environmentally sustainable development
- state of governance

The President of the Assembly stressed that the MDGs "are within our reach," despite the recent global economic crisis. "In particular, we must bridge the gaps in the fight against hunger, child mortality and maternal health," he said. "This is possible. Our work in the coming week must result in a sincere commitment and a genuine plan of action to ensure that we reach the ambitious goal that the international community set for itself in 2000."

Mr. Deiss called for efforts to "reinstate" the UN and its 192-member General Assembly to the centre of global governance. "The challenges which we face today have acquired a global dimension and require global solutions. Our actions must have broad legitimacy and be the result of inclusive processes. We have to improve the mechanisms for information, consultation and cooperation between the United Nations and other actors and tools of global governance," Mr. Deiss said.

"Reform of the Security Council remains important. We are all aware of the need for this reform. I would like us to be able to make progress on this matter, but it is for you, the Member States, to take decisions that enjoy broad support and make a convergence of views possible."

Changes to the UN should be made in a way that reflects its diverse membership, he also noted.

"It is essential that all stakeholders have a say and can participate in decision-making," Mr. Deiss told reporters later. He warned that the UN risked being marginalized by emerging international forums if it failed to effectively play its role as the central organ for international decision making.

He also highlighted the need to promote sustainable development, saying that climate change, vulnerability to natural disasters and threats to biodiversity are some of the environmental challenges that affect all States and require a concerted effort from all countries.

This year's general debate of the General Assembly begins on 23 September and concludes on 30 September. Preceding the opening of the general debate is the Summit on the MDGs held from 20-22 September and convened by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, which will review progress made towards achieving the Goals and how to accelerate progress.

Bangladesh:

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who leaves for New York on September 21 to attend the UN General Assembly (UNGA) session, will focus her speech on the adverse impacts of climate change and global financial crisis as well as restoration of democracy and the rule of law in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Briefing reporters on 11th September Foreign Secretary Mijarul Quayes said the Prime Minister will attend a meeting of 25 selected heads of state and government on climate change. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon has convened the meeting on September 22.

Bangladesh is one of the countries worst exposed to extreme weather conditions caused by global warming due to excessive carbon emissions, and seeks financial and technological assistance for adaptation to the changing climate.

On September 23, she will attend another high-level meeting with US President Barrack Obama along with nine other top peacekeeper-contributing countries in New York.

Quayes said, "The meeting will discuss problems and challenges faced by the peacekeeping missions as well as policy matters."

Besides, the Prime Minister will have several high-level engagements on the sidelines of the UN session.

The Prime Minister will attend a meeting of 25 heads of state and government on climate change, convened by UN secretary-general Ban Ki-Moon, on Sept 22, where she will seek to unite the worse-affected countries and resolve compensation claims for climate change.

Poor nations also point out they will be among the worst affected by climate change but are least responsible, and rich nations needed to accept their financial responsibilities in this regard.

Bangladesh, chair of the LDC Group, will seek compensation for least developed countries. "However, everything depends on the stance of other countries who are also suffering the impact of global warming," said Quayes.

Bangladesh stands on the front line of countries facing fallout of global warming, caused by manmade carbon emissions, and seeks financial and technological assistance for adaptation. Prime minister Sheikh Hasina will seek to unite countries worse-affected by climate change to press for climate funds during the Climate Summit next week.

Quayas said Bangladesh will send female peacekeepers to UN peacekeeping missions, following a request from the UN secretary general.

Ban ki-Moon made the request to Sheikh Hasina during a meeting in Geneva on the sidelines of the World Climate Conference-3 early this month. Hasina assured the UN secretary general that Bangladesh would consider his request.

Bangladesh is a leading contributor to the UN peacekeeping missions. Around 10,000 peacekeepers from Bangladesh are now engaged in different peacekeeping missions around the world.

Quayas told reporters at the Foreign Ministry that female peacekeepers will be recruited from police and army. They will be sent on completion of procedures.

Bangladesh foreign policy, in my view, stands largely on three pillars: security, development and the UN. A foreign policy is successful if it is proactive and result oriented. It must not respond only to situations but plans ahead of strategy so that no situation surprises the country within the region or globally.

Given Bangladesh's constraints, it must play a role that brings tangible benefits to people of Bangladesh. Kautilya once said that the "welfare of a state depends on an active foreign policy." This maxim holds true at the beginning of the 21st century.