

**Draft Speech for Hon'ble Minister for
Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs**

Inaugural Session

Radisson Hotel, Dhaka

November 25th, 2016

At -

***“South Asia Judicial Conference on Environment and
Climate Change”***

Mr. Chairperson of this Session Mr. Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha, Hon'ble Chief Justice of Bangladesh;

His Excellency Mr. Md. Abdul Hamid, Hon'ble President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh;

Mr. Justice Md. Abdul Wahhab Miah, Chairman, Preparatory Committee for the Conference and Senior most Judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh

Esteemed Chief Justices of Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and United Kingdom;

Hon'ble Minister for Environment and Forest Mr. Anwar Hossain Manju;

Beloved Justices;

Mr. Christopher Stephens, Vice-President for Administration and Corporate Management, ADB;

Distinguished Guests, Delegates and Participants from home and abroad;

Representatives of the Print and Electronic Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamualaikum/Very Good Morning.

1. Bangladesh is one of the worst affected countries in the world by climate change effects. Although as an agro-based developing country Bangladesh has very little role in the emission of green house gas causing global warming. Bangladesh being a delta and located between the Bay of Bengal in the south with off and on depression and the Himalayan mountain ranges in the north with melting glaciers, the susceptibility of the country to natural disasters is quite high. The country is rated as the most climate vulnerable one, since one meter rise of the sea level would inundate a third of Bangladesh, resulting in mass migration with cumulative pressure on limited resources.

2. In Bangladesh, we face multitude of environmental problems such as air and water pollution, hazardous industrial waste, land degradation through deforestation etc. Along with impact of rapid industrialization, urbanization and agricultural development, due to population pressure and resulting over-use of some natural resources, i.e. rivers and wetlands, though it is sometimes said that the standard of environment is being degraded day by day earning reputation for Dhaka as one of the worst livable cities in the world and the people of some territory of the country are facing acute water crisis attributable to near desertification. In fact, we are progressing, may be at slow pace, to ensure environmental justice for the people who are affected by depletion of pollution free environment.

3. Bangladesh, given its size has diverse wilderness in its unique landscapes facing the sea waters in the south and hills in the north and south-east. The Chittagong Hill Tracts is part of one of twelve mega-diversity zones on the earth (five of them are in Asia). As an agro-based developing country, Bangladesh has very little role in the emission of greenhouse gases, but because of the energy and industrial pollution caused by the developed

countries in the world Bangladesh has been facing the serious threat of global warming. Due to the global warming and other environmental disorders, if the sea-level rises by 1 meter, then about 16% of lands in Bangladesh will go under water and 14% of the cultivable land and 28% of the forest will be destroyed. On survey our experts found that for such rise of water-level about 10 million people of my country will be doomed to uncertainty. Our environment experts have identified other threats namely- *excessive population density, land-degradation, frequent coastal floods and saline intrusion, excessive use of chemical fertilizer and pesticides to boost production, destruction of wet-land and forests, filling up the rivers and natural water-reservoirs etc by the Land Developers-* which have been damaging the environmental condition and thereby causing an ecological imbalance in Bangladesh.

4. To protect the environment from degradation through human activities and by natural process. Bangladesh has a plenty of domestic laws on environment and also signed numerous international treaties for the promotion and protection of environment. The main stimulation emerges from article 18A of our Constitution which is the Supreme law of the land. It says that the State shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and to preserve and safeguard the natural resources, bio-diversity, wetlands, forests and wildlife for the present and future citizens.” Other than the said constitutional provision, over 200 laws deal with or have relevance to environment. The most significant role is played by the Environment Conservation Act, 1995; Environment Conservation Rules, 1997 and Environment Court Act, 2010. Apart from statutes, Bangladesh has also many well-developed environment policy and many sectoral policies which have relevance to promotion, protection and conservation of environment.

5. It cannot be denied that illiteracy, poverty and lack of effective enforcement of various laws are among others the great challenges for protection of the Environment. Nevertheless, it is heartening to note that the government and the NGOs dealing with the Environment are playing a pioneering role in bringing the environmental issues to court and successfully fighting against the perpetrators causing threat or damage to the environmental elements. The success rate of Environmental Cases in the Supreme Court of Bangladesh as well as in the Environmental courts is encouragingly high. In most of the environmental cases, the respondents are very strong and influential persons of the society and despite all those the Bangladesh Judiciary is committed to dispose of the cases concerning the environment by giving even-handed decisions without any fear or favour. Albeit by this time Bangladesh has made a tangible progress in the area of environmental justice, but we should not be complacent with that, rather we have to continue the efforts in achieving excellence in the related fields. To that end, we require all modern technical and logistic support and co-operation from our regional and global partners.

Thank you all.