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## Bangladesh offers lessons on climate change and disaster risks – Ban



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon opens Climate Vulnerable Forum in Dhaka, Bangladesh

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Climate change is the single most important challenge the world faces, [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon stressed today in Bangladesh, a country that is all too familiar with the impact of extreme weather events and which the United Nations chief hailed as a global leader in disaster risk reduction.

In 1991, a cyclone killed more than 140,000 people in the South Asian nation. Then in 2007, when another major cyclone struck, many volunteers helped move thousands of people out of the disaster area, ultimately saving countless lives. The death toll from that tragedy was 4,000.

“Because of its adaption and preparedness measures, the people of Bangladesh are much safer today,” Mr. Ban said in [remarks](#) to the second Climate Vulnerable Forum, which he opened in Dhaka with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

“The lesson is clear: natural hazards need not cause human catastrophe. There are many cost-effective remedies that communities and countries can take to reduce the impact of extreme weather events,” he stated.

Mr. Ban noted that this is a key message of a special report being released this week by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), on Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters.

“The severity of cyclones, floods and other consequences of climate change are increasing,” he stated. “Strong disaster risk reduction and adaptation policies will be increasingly essential.”

Bangladesh is acutely aware of its vulnerability to the growing impacts of climate change – cyclones, flooding, sea level rise, noted the Secretary-General. “You are on the front line of climate change.”

At the same time, he noted that every country is affected, and there is no country which is safe.

“Climate change is a global problem requiring a global solution,” said Mr. Ban. “It requires urgent efforts on the part of every country, every citizen, every business community and civil society. We need scaled-up national, international and regional efforts.”

He commended the lead taken by Bangladesh to follow “a pro-development, low-carbon path,” noting in particular its establishment of a climate change trust fund and a resilience fund. “In this time of global economic uncertainty, let your commitment to green growth be an inspiration to more developed countries – the major emitters,” he said.

The Secretary-General said he will count on the members of the Climate Vulnerable Forum to arrive at the UN climate change conference that will open in Durban, South Africa, later this month, with a “strong and united” voice.

“Durban must complete what was agreed last year in Cancún,” he said, referring to the previous UN climate change conference.

Governments must ensure that the adaptation framework and technology transfer mechanisms are up and running as soon as possible, said Mr. Ban. They must also advance a work programme on loss and damage to respond to the needs of countries like Bangladesh that are particularly afflicted by extreme climatic events.

“But this will not be enough,” he added. “In Durban I expect that countries will make the clarification on the future of the Kyoto Protocol [the legally binding emission reduction treaty, whose first commitment period is due to expire in 2012].”

“They have to launch the Green Climate Fund and they have to have a clarification on the short term and longer term climate change financing,” he said. “The fund needs to be launched in Durban.

“An empty shell cannot be unanswered. We must fill this shell,” he stated, adding that governments must find ways now to provide financial and technological support to developing nations that do not have any capacity at this time.

Mr. Ban also held a bilateral meeting with the Prime Minister and they jointly [inaugurated](#) the “One Stop Service Centre,” an e-governance initiative. “Digital Bangladesh is becoming a reality,” he noted at that event, adding that modern electronic systems have replaced century-old, heavily bureaucratic manual administrative practices.

He said that the e-service work going on in Bangladesh is remarkable for three reasons. It focuses on people and uses appropriate technologies, and promotes transparency and accountability. Also, the One Stop Service Centres promote public health by delivering information directly to the people.

While in Dhaka, the Secretary-General also met with the Foreign Minister and senior Government officials. In addition, he visited the International Center for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh, and met with Khaleda Zia, the leader of the opposition.

Mr. Ban also visited the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training, located in Rajendrapur, which has trained many of the more than 10,600 Bangladeshi military and police personnel that are taking part in UN peacekeeping missions in such places as Haiti, Côte d’Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

“No nation contributes more to our efforts than you,” he said, noting that one out of 10 UN peacekeepers comes from Bangladesh. “Thank you for helping to defend human lives and human dignity around the world.”

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