

Event Chief Guest's Welcome Speech

Respected Chief Guest of the National Roundtable Workshop for Bangladesh Country Programme Evaluation Mr. M A. Mannan, Honourable State Minister for Finance and Planning, Government of Bangladesh

Respected Special Guest of the Workshop Mr. Shyamalkanti Ghosh, Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of Bangladesh

Mr. Brian Baldwin, Senior Operations Advisor, Programme Management Department, IFAD,

Mr. Oscar Garcia, Director of Independent Office of Evaluation, IFAD

My colleagues from different Ministries/Divisions and Government Agencies

Representatives from Development Partners and Civil Society Organizations and members of the media

Distinguished participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalmu Alaikum and Good Morning

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to extend you all a very warm welcome on behalf of the Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to this Bangladesh Country Programme Evaluation National Roundtable Workshop.

Dear Participants.

You are well aware that the amount of total resources needed for our development investment is not possible to mobilize from our domestic sources. That's why we have to depend on external resources. Over the last few years, official development assistance (ODA) to Bangladesh was around 2% of the national income. In fiscal year 2013-2014, ODA disbursements stood at US\$ 3 billion and ODA funded 32% of the government's annual development programme (ADP). While ODA is increasing in absolute term, it is declining as a percentage of GDP. It reflects that our reliance on foreign aid is being decreased gradually, thanks to our well performing economy.

Being a specialized organization of United Nations, IFAD has been playing an important role in our economic development particularly for the development of our agriculture and eradicating rural poverty since 1979. IFAD has, so far, provided USD 673.9 million of soft loans through 30 projects, which has directly benefited over 9 million households. In addition to these soft loans, IFAD also provided USD 4 million as grant for supporting knowledge and research management initiatives. Although the amount is not that much big as compared to the total amount of foreign assistance we received from our valued development partners but this has played a crucial role in inducing larger flows of national resources to agriculture and improved the country's ability to organize the rural sector and mobilize the rural population.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As an aspirant of middle-income country status by 2021, Bangladesh, with a population of around 160 million, enjoys enormous growth opportunities and faces a distinctive set of challenges relating to external assistance, and more broadly to development effectiveness. The Government is well aware of the ever evolving nature of development landscape, the diversity of relationship with international development partners (DPs), the forms of financing mechanisms and instruments, and the challenges in the articulation of their impact in national economy. When Bangladesh reaches middle-income status, finance flows are bound to evolve significantly. ODA flows from bilateral DPs are likely to decrease considerably, potential sources may increase but lending terms and conditions will become stricter. Alternative resources for development – public, private, domestic, and external will need to be mobilised even more. Given the country's development successes over the years and its present position as a fast growing economy, Bangladesh has a strong urge to make efforts aimed at improving the management of development finance and making the most out of the resources available to achieve its development objectives.

Against this backdrop, I would like to appreciate the IFAD's initiative to evaluate the country programme during the period of 2004 to 2014 and giving us the opportunity to discuss the major findings of the evaluation in a larger forum of stakeholders through this workshop. I come to know, the performance of IFAD's portfolio during 2004 to 2014 has been found to be satisfactory by the evaluation team as it has created positive impacts on rural poverty eradication and empowering the rural people. However, the evaluation underlines that there are pockets of unmet need in rural credit and stresses the need for diversification and policy support for emerging entrepreneurs.

Today's discussion and suggestions will feed the preparation of the next IFAD's Country Strategic Opportunities Programme (COSOP) to make it more effective and result

bound. At the later part of today's workshop there will be a breaking session for three working groups where you will be able to express your views or ideas on three crucial themes. I would like to request you all to stay engaged throughout the workshop and contribute with your valuable knowledge and experience.

Before I conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to our chief guest, the Hon'ble State Minister for Finance and Planning who has given his valuable time and remained present amongst us in this auspicious occasion instead of his busy schedule. I can tell you sir, that your kind presence has increased the importance of this workshop in manifold. I am thankful to our Special Guest, the Secretary of Ministry of Agriculture for his kind presence. I am also thankful to the senior officials of IFAD who has taken the pains to travel from Rome to attend and contribute this workshop with their invaluable expertise. Thanks are also due for those who has put their strenuous efforts to make this workshop happens.

I would like to thank each of you again for attending the workshop.

Thank you.