

PM Seeks Climate Commitments in Geneva

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She backed the World Meteorological Organization's proposal for a World Climate Services System, but stressed the system would only work with international support and funding for climate change adaptations.

The prime minister said Bangladesh is eager to collaborate with the world community, in the areas of mitigation, adaptation, financing, investment, and transfer of technology for facing the threat of climate change on mankind.

But, she said, the challenge to countries like Bangladesh in facing natural disasters from global warming and climate change is "monumental".

She said Bangladesh was among the countries severely affected climate change, and estimates indicate that 20 million Bangladeshis would require relocation by 2050.

"A metre rise of sea level would inundate one third of Bangladesh. This would result in mass migration northwards, imposing increasing pressure on land and resources, and loss of livelihood of about 40 million people."

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, inaugurating the conference earlier in the day, had said inaction on climate could spell global disaster with a rise in sea levels of up to 2 meters (6.5 ft) by 2100.

He called for swifter work on a climate treaty. "We cannot afford limited progress. We need rapid progress," he told the 155-nation climate conference.

The Geneva negotiations are a crucial run-up for a new United Nations climate deal to combat global warming due to be agreed in December in Copenhagen.

Hasina told the conference that Bangladesh, like other countries, was already experiencing erratic patterns of flooding and droughts, which has also become a threat to ensuring food security through sustained agricultural production.

"The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) ranked Bangladesh, as the most vulnerable country to floods, third most to tsunami, and sixth most to cyclones, in terms of human exposure."

She said her country, long-facing natural disasters due to its geographical location, was already investing in adaptation strategies.

Bangladesh has adopted a National Climate Adaptation Plan, one of the first such plans of any country, and established its own Climate Change Fund.

Hasina also said Bangladesh had spent over \$10 billion since the country's independence on flood management schemes, coastal polders, cyclone and flood shelters, and elevation of roads and highways above flood level.

Bangladesh had also developed crop varieties attuned to climate change, initiated programmes to cover 20 percent of land with forests by 2015, strengthened the coastal green belt and built 14,000 cyclone multi-purpose shelters, she said.

But, the prime minister stressed, truly effective climate change adaptations "can only be addressed through enhanced and effective international cooperation."

"Through the decades since independence, whatever progress our nation could achieve, is being eroded by the repeated

and increasing vagaries of nature."

"There is no doubt that human induced climate change is, to a large extent, responsible for these phenomena, and historically our people are least to be blamed for them," said Hasina.

The prime minister told the Geneva meet, "Our agreement here would empower us in our efforts to reverse the alarming climatic trends, which are threatening our sheer existence."

"Devising collective strategies based on informed decisions can improve the dire prognosis about our future," she said.

She said the outcome of the Geneva talks must pave the way for adoption of an assured, adequate and easily accessible fund at Copenhagen in December.

"It must also ensure affordable and eco-friendly technology transfer to developing countries, particularly Least Developed Countries (LDCs) side by side with all important specific commitments for deeper cuts in greenhouse gas emissions."

Hasina flew to Switzerland on Tuesday, with foreign minister Dipu Moni and state minister for environment Hasan Mahmud, to attend the World Climate Conference 3 of the World Meteorological Organization.

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