

## **Bangladesh-Switzerland Joint Declaration during the Official Visit of the President of the Swiss Confederation to Bangladesh (February 4-7, 2018)**

1. At the invitation of the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, His Excellency Mr. Abdul Hamid, the President of the Swiss Confederation, His Excellency Mr. Alain Berset, paid an official visit to Bangladesh from 4-7 February 2018. It was the first official visit by a Swiss President in the 45 years of diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and Switzerland.
2. The two leaders marked the 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations following Switzerland's early recognition of the independent People's Republic of Bangladesh on 13 March 1972 and emphasized Switzerland's long-standing support to Bangladesh's development in key sectors such as poverty reduction, skills development, climate change, preventing violent extremism and disaster prevention.
3. The President of the Swiss Confederation Alain Berset held talks with the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Abdul Hamid, with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister Mahmood Ali and the Speaker of Parliament Shermin Sherin. The President of the Swiss Confederation visited the refugee camps in Cox's Bazaar, met with representatives of Swiss businesses and the civil society and visited the Dhaka Art Summit.

### **Transforming bilateral relations and a new trajectory for the 21st century**

4. The President of the Swiss Confederation congratulated the Prime Minister for Bangladesh's impressive socio-economic development and reiterated Switzerland's commitment to assist Bangladesh.
5. Bangladesh and Switzerland emphasised their shared commitment to democratic values.
6. Both countries agreed to begin a dialogue on the future shape of their development partnership as Bangladesh moved towards middle income status. Bangladesh would welcome Swiss support in areas such as knowledge, innovation and skill development.
7. Both leaders welcomed the positive development of bilateral trade and investment, as they contribute to strengthening bilateral relations.
8. Switzerland, as one of the important foreign investors, welcomed Bangladesh's efforts to improve its investment climate, the respect for social, environmental and labor standards as well as legal security.
9. The two leaders noted with satisfaction the regular holding of bilateral consultations, last round of which took place in Berne in May 2017.

10. The two leaders welcomed the exchange of notes on accompanying persons.

### **Humanitarian crisis: Rohingya Issue**

11. The Swiss side appreciated the fact that despite severe space and resource constraints Bangladesh is bearing a significant burden by hosting more than a million Rohingyas from Myanmar. The Prime Minister informed the President of the Swiss Confederation about the situation in Cox's Bazar and Switzerland commended her on Bangladesh's humanitarian approach towards the Rohingyas. Switzerland appreciated the "Arrangement" with Myanmar on 23 November 2017 for the repatriation of the forcibly displaced Rohingyas and stressed the need for safe, voluntary and dignified return. He announced CHF 12 million of additional funds from Switzerland for the Rohingya refugee crisis. Bangladesh expressed appreciation for Switzerland's humanitarian assistance and other support.

### **Deepening cooperation on the international stage**

12. The two leaders affirmed their strong commitment to the implementation of the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" including Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs. They agreed to encourage a transition to a broader relationship between Switzerland and Bangladesh, underpinned by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this regard, they agreed to explore areas of common interest including the option of concluding a Memorandum of Understanding on the collaboration on SDGs implementation in the near future.

13. Both leaders welcomed the close partnership that has emerged in the area of migration and development. They reiterated their strong commitments towards a positive outcome of the ongoing discussions on the Global Compact on Migration aiming to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration.

14. Both countries are strong supporters of multilateral cooperation and a strong United Nations system.

15. Both sides condemned in strongest terms terrorist acts in Bangladesh and in Europe and expressed sympathy for the victims. They are committed to prevent violent extremism and counter terrorism, in compliance with their international obligations under international law, and preserving open and democratic societies.

16. Bangladesh, being one of the most climate vulnerable countries with a population of 160 million, remains committed to the Paris Climate Agreement. The two leaders expressed satisfaction in their continuing close cooperation on the international climate change architecture and recognised each other's significant contribution to the Paris Agreement of 2015.

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