



## **Youth Conference 2018** ***Bangladesh and Agenda 2030: Aspirations of the Youth***

### **Youth Declaration 2018**

[Translated from the Original Bangla Version]

The youth of Bangladesh represents a generation inspired by the legacy of our country's glorious Liberation War. Imbued with the enterprising dynamism of the youth and driven by the motivation to build a prosperous Bangladesh, we, the young people of our country, have assembled here today at this event titled "Youth Conference 2018: Bangladesh & Agenda 2030 - Aspirations of the Youth". This Conference has brought together about two thousand young people from a wide range of background representing the diversity of our country – religion, colour, gender, class and profession. We have come from all parts of the country inspired by the conviction that we can, and we will, change Bangladesh in light of the global agenda 2030, with the forces of our talent, innovative capacity, skills and initiatives.

We firmly believe that the Agenda 2030's aspiration of economic growth, inclusive society and environment-friendly development resonates closely and reflects the progressive and forward-looking transformation that we all aspire for our beloved motherland. Young people all over the world today are taking an active part in various movements to translate into action the SDG spirit of Leave No One Behind. The youth community of Bangladesh is an integral part of this broader global movement and feels itself intrinsically connected with the global youth community.

Bangladesh's youth community embodies a wide diversity in terms of religion, colour, gender, class, education, profession and geography. The youth of this country played a pioneering role in our glorious Liberation War. Our young people have made seminal contribution in all the achievements that we are proud of as a nation, be it in education, health, sports, entrepreneurship, technology, innovation, environment protection and social movements.

Out of the total population of Bangladesh, about one-third belongs to the youth group aged between 18 and 35 years. We are the key component of the work force of the country and we will retain this stature and provide leadership even in 2030. On the other hand, it is also equally true that young people account for about 80% of the country's total unemployed population.

It is also a reality that, currently about 30% of all youth in this country are not in education, employment or training. Lack of quality education, and because of absence of the needed opportunities to hone their skills, our youth are often deprived from reaping the potential benefits of education, they receive. Often, they don't have access to the required financial support to set up businesses using their talent and skills. Since the young people do not have adequate representation in the country's policymaking, their ability to address the problems they face are rather limited. This lack of needed opportunities gives rise to frustration among a section of the youth. Consequently, some of them become drug-addicts while some others turn to extremism. As a result, youth's unlimited potentials get squandered and those young people become a burden for the nation and a concern for the society.

Indeed what we would really like to do is to be able to devote ourselves to building our country and serving our people, to contribute meaningfully to the attainment of the SDGs targets and goals, as skilled, knowledgeable and good citizens. Youth of the country must have the right to effectively contribute to the design and implementation of the development policies pursued by our country – this is the message that we want to deliver from this Conference to our policymakers.

By joining this Conference, we have come to realise that:

- We have to further enrich our understanding about our country, this region and the world by expanding the horizon of our knowledge. We have to be conscious about the multidimensionality of the challenges that we will face in implementing the SDGs in Bangladesh. We know, this ought to be a continuing process.
- To implement the SDGs, youth must work together with the government, concerned organisations and the relevant stakeholders.
- Youth community will have to take up the responsibility to identify and address the manifold problems faced by our country, as good citizens. We have to do our duty and not expect others to do this for us.
- Youth community must arm itself with the required human qualities and ethical values to ensure Bangladesh's progress in light of the SDGs.

With a view to creating an environment where the talent and strengths of Bangladesh's youth can flourish to its fullest potential, we would like to most strongly voice the following demands from this Conference:

1. Implement the SDGs in a manner that meaningfully involves all stakeholders including particularly the youth community of Bangladesh. Towards this, good governance, transparency and accountability must be ensured at all levels and to the maximum extent.

2. In development philosophy, particularly concerning government policies and national budget, issues of quality education and appropriate use of education must be given the highest priority. In this context the followings should be ensured:
  - a. Education must be work-oriented, and towards this enhancement of skills must be considered to be central to all the educational activities.
  - b. Education curriculum must be modern and dynamic, compatible with the changing demands of the economy and the times.
  - c. The current multi-streamed education system must be replaced with a single-streamed system.
  - d. Teachers' training system must be modernised in alignment with the demands of the economy.
  - e. The existing gaps in quality of education between rural and urban areas must be eliminated.
  - f. The structure of institutions and various entities that are concerned with education sector governance must be modernised. There is no place for corruption in the education system.
3. Incentives and institutional support of the government has to be ensured to realise the innovative potentials of the youth. In this context, youth from the relatively more backward regions must be given priority.
4. Employment as per merit and promotion according to professional excellence must be ensured at all levels. At the same time, special employment schemes must be designed for the deprived sections and backward communities of the society so that they are not excluded from the development mainstream.
5. Special arrangements and incentives must be put in place towards education and employment opportunities for women, and to raise their capacity to realise their potential as entrepreneurs. For this, a clause that refers to empowerment of women through enhancement of skills of young women must be added to the National Skills Development Policy 2019.
6. To confront all types of violence against women, steps towards awareness raising, legislative initiatives and modernisation of existing laws must be given highest priority. Effective implementation of these laws has to be ensured.
7. Special and targeted initiatives must be taken to enhance educational opportunities, skills and employment of indigenous people living in the hill tracts regions and the flat lands, dalit community and the youth of the third gender. Adequate allocations must be made to implement the concerned activities.
8. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) must be incorporated into the Rights and Security of Persons with Disability Act 2013. The Act must be implemented in full measure.
9. Special projects must be taken and adequate funding must be allocated for the development of the youth living in haor, char and coastal regions.
10. Special steps must be undertaken to develop youth entrepreneurs. For this:
  - a. A Youth Bank has to be established.

- b. After having taken decision as regards an appropriate and justified interest rate, the maximum ceiling of loan amount provided by the Department of Youth Development must be raised and its availability must be ensured.
  - c. There must be special schemes dedicated to the youth community in all credit programmes run by banks and financial organisations.
  - d. Young entrepreneurs should be given priority in the special economic zones.
  - e. Youth community has to be adequately involved in all activities associated with realising the potentials of the Blue Economy.
  - f. One stop service must be put in place to support businesses run by young entrepreneurs.
11. Government must set up appropriate institutions to improve the physical and mental health of the youth community. The National Health Policy 2011 must include concrete guidelines and adequate measures to safeguard health of young people. The Mental Health Policy must be finalised on an urgent basis.
  12. Young women and men should be encouraged to stay out of drug-addiction through appropriate awareness raising programmes concerning the dangers of drugs. Implementation of laws relating to illegal use of drugs must be ensured through proper enforcement.
  13. As part of constituting the envisaged Youth Parliament, the Youth Council must be formed as early as possible in light of the Youth Organizations (Registration and Management) Act, 2015.
  14. The Youth Leadership Forum of the Department of Youth Development must be strengthened and made more representative. In the training modules of the Department of Youth Development, inclusion of teaching courses on the SDGs must be made mandatory.
  15. Adequate funds must be made available in the national budget and various plans and programmes of the government to implement activities in support of youth development.
  16. The state must take appropriate steps to realise the potentials of the youth community in order to take full advantage of the demographic dividend.
  17. In order to ensure road safety and transport safety, necessary initiatives must be undertaken towards reforms and enforcement relevant laws.
  18. Government must put in place environment-friendly policies. Development activities must be undertaken in accordance with these policies. Development strategies must be designed in a manner that safeguards the environment in accordance with the demands voiced by the youth of the country.
  19. Laws concerning development of the youth and protection of their interests must be implemented in full. Reforms of these policies and laws must be undertaken as needed and necessary. Some of these are: National Youth Policy 2017, National Education Policy 2010, Bangladesh Labour (amended) Law 2013, Right and Protection Law of Physically Challenged People 2013, National Women Development Policy 2011, Child Marriage Prevention Law 2017, Human

Trafficking Prevention and Suppression Law 2012 and Acid Crime Suppression Law 2012.

20. A conducive environment has to be created where the country's youth community is able to develop and thrive by exercising free-thinking and by pursuing intellectual interests in an enlightened way. For this to happen, it will be necessary to allow democratic values to be practiced and fundamental rights to be exercised in full measure in light of our constitution which was framed to reflect the spirit of our great Liberation War. These relate more particularly to freedom of expression and the right to be united.
21. We the Youth community of Bangladesh, as major users of information technology, must be able to enjoy full freedom of expression through the means of information technology. Any law that limits this right will not be acceptable to us.
22. We condemn any ideology and all activities in the name of extremism. We demand that appropriate actions be taken to confront and eliminate terrorism.
23. Youth-friendly governance must be established at all levels. Youth community must have the opportunity to express their views and opinion concerning policies of the state. Towards this:
  - a. Youth community's effective involvement and representation must be ensured in all activities starting from politics at all levels, local level government and community programmes.
  - b. Youth community must be included in all committees and at every level that concern implementation of the SDGs. Representation of youth organisations in these committees must be ensured at all time.
  - c. Youth organisations' active participation must be encouraged and ensured in Upazila Development Committees.
24. Effective measures must be put in place to address unethical use of the youth in political activities. In this regard, all political parties must come up with concrete policies and guidelines.
25. In their election manifestos, political parties must include concrete programmes and activities concerning the rights of the young people and plans to involve them in the development of the country and in nation building.

The young people of Bangladesh aspires for a fair and prosperous Bangladesh where there will be adequate opportunities for the youth to develop their talent and realise their potentials, and where no one will be left behind. From this august gathering of the youth of the country, we would like to forcefully voice our determination to build a Bangladesh that is socio-economically developed, built on the ethos of inclusiveness and rich in human qualities and endowments. We pledge to work towards this Bangladesh by making best use of our talent and our abilities, and with the support of the state and the broader society. Together, we will change Bangladesh.



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