

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE INFORMAL MEETING
ON
FOLLOW-UP OF WORKSHOP ON “NATIONAL SECURITY AND CIVIL-
MILITARY RELATIONS IN BANGLADESH”**

1. The Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) and the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) with support from the Hawaii-based Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS), hosted a workshop entitled “National Security and Civil-Military Relations in Bangladesh” in Dhaka on 16-19 November 2009. During the workshop, the participants from civilian and security sectors engaged in a meaningful debate about the state of Bangladesh security matters and arrived at a series of concrete recommendations. As a follow-up step of the said workshop, an informal meeting was held at BISS Auditorium on 02 March 2010 at 1100 hours. The meeting was chaired by Major General Muhammed Firdaus Mian, psc, Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS. Beside the organizers (BISS and BEI) and number of participants of the said workshop a team from the Defense Institution Reform Initiative (DIRI) of USA led by Major General Olson (Retd) joined the informal meeting. The US team had representative from PACOM, OSD and US Embassy in Dhaka. Mr. Tyler Rauert, Professor of International Law and Political Violence, Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Washington, DC, USA also joined the meeting.

2. In the informal meeting, a review of the outcome of the Workshop on “National Security and Civil-Military Relations in Bangladesh” held in Dhaka on 16-19 November 2009 was made. The major priorities for national security and civil-military relations for Bangladesh drawn out of the workshop (Good Governance; Democratization of Political Parties and strengthening Local Governments; Trust Building in Civil-Military Affairs; Responsibility of the Media; Educational Reform and Terrorism) were highlighted. While discussing the challenges associated with these security priorities the meeting participants were in the opinion of adding ‘Role and credence of the judiciary’ to the challenges associated with Good Governance.

3. The meeting was apprised about the present status of the follow-up which included:

a. Two issues (Good Governance and Trust Building in Civil-Military Affairs) of the six priorities as ascertained during the workshop have been taken for further deliberation in the form of seminar / panel discussion by BISS. In addition BISS will organize a regional seminar on counter-terrorism with the Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS) of India in April, 2010 and BEI will hold a seminar on counter-terrorism sometimes in mid-2010.

b. Prime Minister’s Office/ Ministry of Foreign Affairs have been proposed to form a Core Group to be constituted of the nominated members, who had

participated in the Workshop on “National Security and Civil-Military Relations in Bangladesh”.

c. The proposal is under consideration. However, till a formal Core Group is formed BIISS has been advised to have discussions as and when needed with the Core Group members in informal manner to evaluate the progress made on the ascertained priority issues, help the Government in advancing the workshop recommendations and review the developments and implementations of the workshop findings.

4. While formulating modalities of the functions of the Core Group the following proposals of BIISS/ BEI were agreed upon:

a. The functions of the Core Group would be:

-To provide necessary assistance to the Government of Bangladesh in advancing the workshop recommendations;

-To sensitize the political leadership and civil society about the importance of implementing the workshop recommendations;

-To conduct public and educational institutions debates on the issues of national security and civil-military relations in Bangladesh;

-To organize seminars/workshops on the priority issue areas identified in the workshop recommendations; and

-To hold a workshop in November/December 2010 to review implementation of the workshop recommendations.

b. Core Group Convenors:

-By virtue of being the organizers, the chief executives of BEI and BIISS will be the Joint Convenors of the Core Group.

-Four members each from BEI and BIISS will assist their respective Joint Convenors.

c. Core Group Composition:

Civil Sector

Barrister Anisul Islam Mahmud, MP

Brigadier General S K Abu Baker (Retd), MP

Ambassador (Retd) Mr. Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury, BB

Air Commodore Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury,ndc, psc (Retd)
Ministry of Home Affairs Representative
Ministry of Foreign Affairs Representative
Ministry of Finance Representative
Mr. Mahi B. Chowdhury
Mr. Enayetullah Khan

Security Sector

Ministry of Defence Representative
Armed Forces Division Representative
Army Representative
Navy Representative
Air Force Representative
NSI Representative
DGFI Representative
Police Representative

As there was no representation of academia, the following two names were added in the Core Group composition: (i) Prof. Nazmul Ahsan Kalimullah, Department of Public Administration, University of Dhaka and (ii) Dr. Abdur Rob Khan, Associate Professor, North South University, Dhaka.

d. Activity Schedule:

- To hold a workshop/seminar every four months on one of the six priority issues as ascertained;
- To involve college and university students in debates on issues of national security and civil-military relations in Bangladesh;
- To arrange talk-shows on TV; and
- To hold a review workshop in one year.

5. Major General Olson (Retd), opined that the establishment of the proposed Core Group would be very important in advancing the workshop recommendations. He added that having identified the key issues and Core Group organized, three elements in this respect were still to be dealt with: (i) Obtaining a mandate and official status of the Core Group; (ii) Recognizing and enabling the Core Group members; and (iii) Identifying necessary resources.

6. The chair of the meeting Major General Muhammed Firdaus Mian wrapped up the meeting by saying that change was a long process. To witness an intended change there would be patience needed by everyone. Difficulties will be there but these are to be faced appropriately. He also reminded that we might get assistance in this regard, particularly from the institutions like DIRI, APCSS and NESAs of USA, notwithstanding the fact that they have their own businesses and limitations.