



Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) organised a Seminar on “The US-Bangladesh Relations: Working Together on Global Issues” at BISS Auditorium on 13 December 2015.



Welcome Remarks by Director General:

Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc, Director General of BIISS welcomed the participants and distinguished guests including the members of diplomatic corps and the Foreign Secretary to the seminar on “The US-Bangladesh Relationship: Working Together on Global Issues.” He was privileged and honoured to welcome the Guest Speaker, HE Mr. Thomas A. Shannon, Undersecretary for Political Affairs Designate, U.S Department of State, on behalf of all members of BIISS.

General Rahman noted this is the month of December and it carries special significance for the people of Bangladesh who achieved their final victory on 16 December 1971. He conveyed his deepest respect to the martyrs of the great war of independence who sacrificed their lives for the betterment of the people. He thanked again HE Mr. Shannon and the audience for their kind presence and sharing their valuable ideas and thoughts. Finally, he wished a prosperous future for all on the occasion of the victory of Bangladesh.



**REMARKS BY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
POLITICAL AFFAIRS-DESIGNATE THOMAS A. SHANNON
AT BANGLADESH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AND
STRATEGIC STUDIES (BISS)**

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman and thank you Director General for your remarks. Foreign Secretary, thank you very much for being with us today; I am really honoured. Mr. Ambassador (Mohammad Ziauddin, Bangladesh's ambassador to the US), thank you very much for travelling all the way from Washington to be here with us today. It is a great honour. And of course, we all have the honour to have our Assistant Secretary for Central and South Asian Affairs, Nisha Desai Biswal as well as our Ambassador here, Marcia Bernicat, a dear friend and one of our very best ambassadors. We are very lucky to have her here representing the United States. And let me welcome all of you and thank you for taking the time today to attend this event. It is important for me since it is my first visit to Bangladesh. As noted, I have recently been nominated by President Obama to be the Undersecretary for Political Affairs and I determined that as I wait confirmation from our Senate that my first bilateral visit as Undersecretary would be to Bangladesh. I would be following my visit here with a trip to Sri Lanka and it is part of an effort by the United States Government and by in particular, to focus on the importance of South Asia

but especially the larger Indian Ocean and the Indo-Pacific region as a strategic focal point for the United States and the important role that Bangladesh will play in our engagement in this region; and the important things that we can learn from Bangladesh as we look for ways to make our relations with Bangladesh and countries of the Indian Ocean and South Asia more relevant to the success of the main peoples and nations in this part of the world but also help better to connect this part of the world globally in a way that enhances the benefits for all of our citizens. As I noticed, it is a tremendous honour for me to be here today and speaking to this institute; and I am particularly excited to be visiting just a few days before the commemoration of the Victory Day. In fact, Bangladesh's Ambassador to Washington has already invited me to the Victory Day celebration in Washington and I look forward to participating in that great invitation. Great struggles for freedom, democracy and hope have often come at great costs and it was no different in Bangladesh. All of you are familiar with the cost of your independence and your victory. And shortly after that struggle ended, Senator Ted Kennedy came to Dhaka to address a newly free and democratic nation. He delivered an urgent, simple and genuine message, "I have come here to say", Ted Kennedy said, "that America cares". Today, the vibrancy and colour of Bangladesh is matched only by its citizens' entrepreneurial spirit, its ability to achieve impressive economic growth and foster innovation across your great nation. This is a country the world listens to whether on peacekeeping, climate change or counterterrorism. And time has proven Senator Kennedy right; over four decades, the United States has invested billions of dollars to partner with the government of Bangladesh and to improve the lives of Bangladeshis: to grow more food, build more roads, teach more skilled teachers, healthcare providers and soldiers. Thousands of Bangladeshis now pursue higher education in America and many return to apply their new knowledge and skills for their country's benefit. Hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshis call the United States home and they are Bangladesh's third largest source of remittances. They have strengthened both of our nations and serve as a valuable bridge between our societies. Your country is an example of what is possible when a nation founded on democratic principles, opens a pathway for pluralistic and entrepreneurial citizens who pursue a better life for their families, a better path for their country and a better future for their planet. Today, I would like to add a few words to what Senator Ted Kennedy said 44 years ago—"America still cares; about that, there can be no doubt". And to his timeless address, I would simply add, "Bangladesh matters".

Bangladesh is the eighth most populous country in the world and central to the stability of a region that is home to nearly two billion people. Bangladesh contributes more international

peacekeepers than any other country, helping bring security to people's lives from Ethiopia to East Timor, including in some of the most difficult places on earth. Bangladesh is at the forefront of addressing and mitigating one of the world's great challenges—climate change. As the world's third-largest Muslim majority country, Bangladesh is an exceptional example of what a tolerant, pluralistic, and moderate nation can accomplish. And just look at what Bangladesh has accomplished in a few short decades: You have reduced the poverty rate from over half of the population to less than a third; you have achieved self-sufficiency in food production; Your maternal and child health programs achieved the Millennium Development Goals, and have ensured that a higher proportion of children can get an education, receive proper health care, and escape the shackles of poverty. You have had partners in these accomplishments, and the United States is proud to be one of them. But your achievements are your own and the product of a simple fact: Bangladeshis are some of the most resilient, ambitious, and entrepreneurial people on this planet. You can see it everywhere: amidst the bustling traffic on the streets, in the thriving trade across world-renowned markets, and among the humming machines of the factories. I would like to talk about those factories for a moment. The potential of Bangladesh's ready-made garment industry is the envy of much of the developing world; in 1980s, it was the 76th biggest garment exporter. Today, it ranks second, just behind China. It employs over 4 million workers, the vast majority of them women and adds over 20 billion dollars to the economy every year. It is the engine that drives Bangladesh's growth, and the foundation of the country's ascent up the economic value chain. It is also the foundation of our commercial relationship with Bangladesh; the United States is the largest single-country destination of Bangladesh's garment exports. No one buys more garments from Bangladesh than we do. Take a stroll inside any shopping mall in America, and you will see labels everywhere that read "Made in Bangladesh". Just as the logo on the outside of a shirt, be it a sports team or a popular fashion line—is a brand, so is the label on the inside. That is why it is so important to build a strong and respected "Brand Bangladesh" where workers' rights and safety are protected. And that is why we have invested our time and energy, together with other governments, international organisations, and the private sector, in helping the government of Bangladesh improve building safety, fire safety, and the protection of workers' rights.

In this regard, it is our purpose to work with Bangladesh's government to restore GSP benefits. Bangladesh has made important progress in meeting the GSP action plan's objectives—especially in inspections, closures, construction, and upgrades of factories. The safety of the worksite, however, needs to be matched by the ability of workers to exercise their rights to

organise, freely associate and bargain collectively. We will continue to work with Bangladesh on these issues, because not only are empowered workers better positioned to ensure their own safety, they're also more productive at their jobs, which means greater efficiency, larger output, higher profits, increased competitiveness, and most importantly, can be linked to higher standards of living and more inclusive economic growth.

As I mentioned, the vast majority of garment workers are women. And those jobs have helped many women feed, clothe, and educate their children, or save up enough to buy a house or open a business back in their home villages. The more women, who can enter and safely advance in that industry, the better off the next generation of all Bangladeshis will be, and the next, and the next. And, thanks in large part to the Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's leadership, Bangladesh has made enormous strides in gender equality and women's empowerment. Indeed, much of Bangladesh's success has come from making women central to its development agenda. As the saying goes, "if you educate a woman, you educate a family." That's why we have made women's empowerment a cornerstone of our cooperation, because we know how important it is for Bangladesh's future success. And there are still tremendous gains to be made from reducing gender-based violence and ending early and forced marriages—which have terrible social, economic, and health consequences that carry on to the next generation.

Academic studies show that when women are economically empowered, the physical well-being and productive potential of their children increase dramatically. And there is no doubt that the global economy's future will be largely driven by technology and the internet. The government of Bangladesh has wisely taken note of these phenomena, and invested in over 4,000 digital centres to promote women's leadership in the digital economy. Many entrepreneurs are now opening internet cafes where women can connect, learn, transact, innovate, and even engage in the burgeoning sector of digital micro work, which has fascinating potential.

Like the United States, Bangladesh has gained much from connecting its economy to global supply chains and markets. But the United States also shares borders with two of our top three trading partners. Trade with our neighbors in North America is worth over one trillion dollars, and sustains tens of millions of jobs throughout the continent. Without regional trade, we would arguably not be the global power we are today. Of course, it was not easy getting to where we are—we had to build infrastructure, industries, and an institutional architecture that allowed trade to move freely, quickly, and profitably. With similar efforts, Bangladesh can become a leading

economy in South Asia, serving as a manufacturing powerhouse and a hub for the movement of goods and people among the countries of South and Southeast Asia.

Recent months have shown us some spectacular examples of the kinds of efficiencies that can be achieved with greater connectivity. For seaborne trade from Bangladesh to India, cargo ships used to have to sail from Chittagong south to Singapore, then west, around the southern tip of the subcontinent, and all the way to Mumbai—a journey of over 3,300 nautical miles. But soon, thanks to an agreement between India and Bangladesh, merchants can send their goods directly from Chittagong to Chennai along the Indo-Bangla coastal shipping route, meaning a huge cut in sailing time, costs, and carbon emissions. On land, the recent completion of an agreement on motor vehicles between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal, means that people and goods can make it to Kolkata from India's northeast by going through Bangladesh instead of around it, reducing travel time by more than half.

While these are just the most recent developments, Bangladesh has long been a leader in connecting the region, as shown by its hosting of the BIMSTEC secretariat—an important organisation that brings together the countries on the Bay of Bengal's littoral.

Bangladesh has also doubled its exports in the past five years and is on track to become a leading economy in South Asia and a gateway to the thriving economies of Southeast Asia, markets that are worth over two and a half trillion dollars and home to over 600 million consumers. The United States is an enthusiastic supporter and implementer of this vision, which we are helping to realise through our Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor initiative. We are committed to economic connectivity because it is the key to regional prosperity, stability, and opportunity for the American economy. Many economists predict that by the year 2050, Asia will comprise 50% of global GDP. It is clear that we are at the beginning of an Indo-Pacific century, and the United States, as a Pacific nation, will play its part in this story. We will manufacture, we will trade, and we will promote and uphold the norms and rules that have ensured the global growth of the past 65-plus years.

And the United States will continue to be a partner in Bangladesh's economic growth through trade and investment: we are already one of Bangladesh's largest foreign investors, and in the past two years, our two-way trade has grown steadily, to more than US\$6 billion. We are also working together in other important areas. Over the years, we have strengthened and expanded

our security dialogue and our military-to-military cooperation. Our soldiers and sailors are training together on land and at sea, and our decades-long peacekeeping partnership with Bangladesh has proven an unalloyed success—Bangladesh has such an expertise in peacekeeping that it now trains other nations’ troops. Our goal is to help the Bangladeshi military achieve its goals of being a lynchpin of regional stability, securing the strategic sea lanes of the Indian Ocean from crime and conflict, and continuing to provide disaster relief when its neighbours are in need—just as it has in the past with Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Burma.

Bangladesh is also an example to the world when it comes to confronting the challenges of climate change. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s efforts on this were recently recognised by the United Nations, which bestowed upon her its highest environmental accolade—the Champion of the Earth award for policy leadership.

The danger we face from severe storms, floods, fires, heat waves, and droughts is going to get worse before it gets better, and preparation is key. So, we hope to work with Bangladesh to build better warning systems and crisis management centers, further reducing the impact of severe storms and extreme weather. We want to help save more lives, while further reducing the economic impacts of natural disasters. Natural disasters are not the only things that disrupt economies, so do instability and insecurity.

We know that trade and investment do much better when there is peace and stability. Capital, as the saying goes, is a coward. What builds peace and stability in a society? First and foremost is the rule of law and law enforcement. Bangladesh has a strong police force, one that protects all Bangladeshis and helps the citizens of this country to live free and thrive. I want to thank the Dhaka police for the tremendous job they have been doing to protect our diplomats and their families. My hat goes off to those—quite a few of whom are in the room today, who have made it their career to protect and serve. And in democratic societies like ours, that also means protecting citizens’ ability to exercise their political and civil liberties, especially the freedoms of peaceful assembly and expression.

Second is tolerance and respect for our fellow citizens. These are the basis of the open society that defines our democracies. We have learned that nations achieve their full potential only when national debates even disagreements are channeled through peaceful, open, and unhindered democratic processes. And Bangladesh has sought to be a global example of the strengths of

tolerance, inclusiveness, and democracy. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms lies at the foundation of a stable society, and was at the heart of Bangladesh's struggle for independence.

Finally, a determination to protect our societies and our heritage. The United States and Bangladesh share a relationship built on Senator Kennedy's dedication to those who strive for self-determination, democracy, and dignity. And we are working toward a common vision, to support a Bangladesh that is inclusive, prosperous, and secure.

Violent extremists and terrorists do not share that vision. Rather, they wish for a Bangladesh that is divided, weakened, and chaotic. They want to destroy centuries-long traditions of religious tolerance and communal harmony. They want a society that does not cherish literature, music and the arts as Bangladesh long has, but one that languishes in violence, intolerance and fear. And they seek to accomplish these ends through savagery and terror. As we have seen in both our countries, including most recently in San Bernardino, California, we share a common vulnerability to this threat, but we also share a firm resolve to defeat it. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's administration has shown that resolve, and the U.S. government intends to expand our counterterrorism cooperation with Bangladesh. We will prevail, in the words of President Obama, "by being strong and smart, resilient and relentless."

The world is growing more connected, and what happens to the citizens of one country inevitably affects the citizens of another. This is a global challenge, and the United States stands with you in your efforts to counter violent extremism and fight terrorism. We are committed to helping Bangladesh continue its march into the bright future it has envisioned for itself. To borrow another quote from the late Senator Kennedy: in this fight, "we are all Bangladeshis, we are all Americans, and we all share the great alliance of humanity."

We have accomplished much together, but there is much more to be done. Together, we must continue to create a future where children can grow up healthy and educated; where women have equal opportunities as men to learn, work and succeed; where citizens can exercise their rights and freedoms without fear of harm; and where we all, regardless of religious and ethnic origins, can live together in peace.

Whether it is climate change, security, women's empowerment, or development, the past 40 years have shown that the United States and Bangladesh can accomplish amazing things when

we work together. And the next 40 years will be no different, because our partnership is one whose strength, resilience, and potential will only grow with time.

Thank you.

Open Session (Q & A Session)



HE Thomas A. Shannon read out the selected questions and answered them. At the outset he thanked everyone. He mentioned there are a lot of quite striking and interesting questions from the audience. HE Shannon started with the most controversial issue because it referred to internal politics of the US.

Question 1.

There were two questions related to recent statements made by Mr. Donald Trump and they basically wanted to know how he viewed the future relationship between the US and Bangladesh, especially in regard to the fact that Bangladesh is a Muslim majority country and basically how did the US understand its relationship with Muslim countries around the nation?

Answer: Undersecretary Shannon said he would leave comments relating to US domestic politics to the country's domestic commentators. But he noted President Obama very clearly saying the United States is a great nation intent on promoting tolerance and respecting the religious beliefs of all people. And they are a nation defined by their constitution, not defined by

blood, faith, race or ethnicity. They are defined by their commitment to an open society and freedoms that are secured in their constitution and will remain so. There is a large and welcoming space for Muslims in the United States as well as for Muslims around the world in US' engagement. He wanted to underscore the fact that as the US thinks about how it would engage in the world, it thinks about that in terms of how it can enhance its interests and values. US' values for an open society, freedom of religion, respect for beliefs are profound part of what US does. He also sought to underscore the importance of US' engagement with countries like Bangladesh but similar countries like Indonesia, Malaysia and many countries in the Middle East and how the US welcomes them as partners and looks forward to working with them.



Question 2.

This question related to gender relations. It said gender relations in Bangladesh have been undergoing a process of considerable transformation as part of a broader process of economic transition and social change. How does the USA view the position of women in Bangladesh in the context of empowerment?

Answer: As H E Shannon noted in his talk, the US has decided broadly in its development policy to make women a centrepiece of that policy, not only because it believes women play a central role as managers of families and as economic actors but the country has also discovered that women play key roles in conflict resolution and peacemaking. And therefore, the US is going to continue to find ways through its development assistance programmes but also through

engagements to highlight the important role and functions of women in various societies. And increasingly, it is being found that economies require the participation of all members of societies. Therefore, the US will continue to highlight the role women play in economies.



Question 3.

This question has to do with climate change and global warming. It reads climate change and global warming are at the top of global agenda and Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world in the case of climate change. The commitment of the Government of Bangladesh to address climate change has been globally recognised. For providing leadership in this regard, Sheikh Hasina, the honourable Prime Minister of Bangladesh, has been bestowed with the UN's environmental award "Champion of the Earth" on 28 September 2015. How did Undersecretary Shannon view existing Bangladesh-US cooperation on these issues and how these issues can be further strengthened and expanded?

Answer: Undersecretary Shannon termed the closing of or conclusion of a global agreement on climate change as a tremendous accomplishment but this would not have happened without very strong leadership from developing nations and it would not have happened without very strong leadership from Bangladesh. He expressed his sincere gratitude to Bangladesh for that and highly lauded the role that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has played in this regard. He informed the audience that the recognition she received from the United Nations was admired in one of US' most prominent magazines on foreign affairs, *Foreign Policy*, which recognised her as one of the

prominent global thinkers on climate change. And it is very important for US as the country engages on climate change issues, to have a clear understanding of the challenges and vulnerabilities faced by countries like Bangladesh. The kind of cooperation and collaboration US has developed around climate change dialogues and the kind of exchanges it has held, have enhanced its diplomacy, made it more relevant, meaningful and ultimately more successful. But still a lot of work has to be done, obviously. The agreement itself has set a pretty tough benchmark: reducing temperature increase to less than 2 degrees over time. That is going to be very hard given the tremendous importance fossil fuels still have in the global economy. But US is going to continue to work with its partners around the world, Bangladesh among them, to try to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels, move forward towards alternative and renewable forms of energy. But also understand that at the end of the day, the purpose is to build sustainable economies that can create jobs and economic prosperity for all peoples.



Question 4.

This question said that the United States has been one of the two superpowers for about half a century and the only superpower for about quarter of a century. Middle East problems, Palestine issues have not been resolved so far. Is that because the United States is not trying hard enough to resolve those issues?

Answer: Undersecretary Shannon labeled this as a great question. He said the US has tried hard and will continue to try hard on those specific issues. But the world is a big place and a quarter of a century is not a long time. He implied nations are facing various emerging challenges in this 21st Century. When he began his diplomatic career in 1984, the Soviet Union was alive and well. The Cold War was in full swing, the global economy was bifurcated between free market systems and closed market communist systems; it was quite a different place than it is today. When he thinks about the changes that have occurred over the thirty years of his career, he thinks he has seen a lot. But the reality is, as countries look into the future, the kinds of changes they are going to be dealing with, are going to be quite dramatic and accelerating over time because the drivers of change have globalised. So, the change is actually accelerating. And this is going to put an enormous strain on the institutions of global governance, on US bilateral and larger multilateral diplomacy. When it comes to institutions of global governance, the strain is already visible. Bangladesh, which plays such an important role in peacekeeping operations, must feel it because the peacekeeping operations are strained everywhere at this point of time.

When one looks at the refugee situation, there are 60 million displaced people in the world; this is the largest number of displaced people since in recorded history, people began keeping these kinds of records. The United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) is literally overwhelmed with demands it is facing right now; this is true across the board. This means there is an urgent need to look for ways to revitalise the institutions of global governance and make them more responsive, relevant and capable but it also means that the US needs to rethink how it should conduct its diplomacy more broadly and needs to understand that increasingly; how the US should move forward is going to depend on the kinds of alliances and partnerships it builds. In other words, it is no longer going to be a question about whether the United States has or has not solved a problem but the extent to which its diplomacy, working with its partners and allies around the world is able to create an environment in which countries working together, can solve problems. He said he really thinks that in this regard, as his country looks especially into South Asia, into the Indo-Pacific region, the kind of relation it has with Bangladesh, is going to be a defining one. It is going to help US understand better how to operate in a successful fashion in this part of the world. It is also going to help the country (US) to have a partner with deep experience and reach, and one that can help them be successful in their larger diplomacy.



Remarks by the Special Guest Mr Md. Shahidul Haque, the honorable Foreign Secretary, Bangladesh Government

Mr Md. Shahidul Haque, the honourable Foreign Secretary, thanked BIISS for organising the seminar, and all designated guests for their kind presence in the seminar. He specially thanked Ambassador Shannon for his lecture on U.S.-Bangladesh relationship. Mr. Haque highly appreciated the Undersecretary Shannon for his speech which covered almost all issues of the bilateral relationship in a focused manner on global issues.

Mr. Haque shed light on U.S.-Bangladesh relationship in a bigger global context. Bangladesh-U.S. relationship goes within a bilateral context; there are also multilateral and regional contexts which should also be looked for in terms of geopolitics and geoeconomics. He also tried to flag how Bangladesh would look in 2030 or 2035 in terms of geopolitics and geoeconomics. The Foreign Secretary appreciated Mr. Shannon's speech where he explained why Bangladesh matters, and even gave a good rationale. Nevertheless, Mr. Haque gave his own explanation on why Bangladesh matters. He noted Bangladesh is a stable country with a very sound political, economic and cultural fundamental under the solid, sound, wise and visionary leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina which the Undersecretary also mentioned a number of times.

Mr. Haque stated that Bangladesh is a pluralistic democracy; diversity is the country's style and therefore, the country should try to continue to further strengthen that strength. That is where the

country's inspiration comes from, and in 1971 for those the people fought. Bangladesh is a country where people are politically alert. They have got a vibrant socio-cultural environment and a very dynamic civil society and that is why Bangladesh matters. Bangladesh matters because the economic growth path is in a very stable direction. Foreign Secretary tried to portray how Bangladesh would look in 2030-35 or 2050s. Geopolitically, there are number of studies that foresee Bangladesh continue to play a major role in global politics. He quoted from the report of IMF October 2015 on performance of Bangladesh economy, "Prudent macroeconomic policies and structural reforms have helped steer Bangladesh economy through domestic and global challenges in the last three and half years. Growth has been robust; inflation has been eased, foreign exchange reserves have risen to a comfortable position and public debts have remained stable." That is how he looks at the present and future of Bangladesh.

Mr. Haque mentioned if Bangladesh matters, then it matters within a global context. He referred to Undersecretary Shannon's point regarding power in the open session, with regard to the changing geo-politics and geo-economics of a region; power is not only a concept but power that relates to relations between entities and states are important. Countries are also passing through an era that is radically changing. According to him, it is much more than change and it is going through an unprecedented transformation. He expressed his satisfaction on the issue that all states signed a binding agreement on 12 December 2015, where world leaders for the first time, signed an agreement to keep global temperature below 1.5 degrees which all strode to reach. Words like 'climate justice'; words like 'balanced financing' or 'fair financing' have been incorporated in the agreement. As Ambassador Shannon has mentioned, some of the leaders including President Obama and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina worked together to bring those issues into the negotiation. This year, another thing has happened; for the first time, the world has reached consensus that development intervention is no longer applicable. So, there is a need to have a different type of intervention which is known as 2030 Development Agenda. He mentioned President Obama in New York forcefully put in forward US' support along with other countries including Bangladesh on the issue how the nations would like to look at 2030 in terms of global development. At this stage, he wished he could stop here and go back with a win-win situation. But that is not happening not in Bangladeshi society nor around the world and that was very much disturbing; there are also some irritating things happening in Bangladeshi society and around the world. Some of the debates and disturbing things are creating many difficulties not only in the U.S. but also in other countries.

Foreign Secretary referred to honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's identification of some challenges which she mentioned in her statement at the UNGA in 2014: one is climate change and the other is combating terrorism and countering extreme violence, where U.S. and Bangladesh have strong cooperation and that will continue to grow stronger.

According to him, there are also huge scopes of cooperation in some other areas like human migration which is reshaping global politics. Currently, Bangladesh is hosting half a million Myanmar nationals. Thus, Bangladesh is an origin country, a destination country and to some

extent, a transit country of human mobility and migration. In future, relation between states will also be defined not only by the technological revolution but also by the interaction between peoples.

The Foreign Secretary noted Undersecretary Shannon rightly pointed out the issue of connectivity and how it reshapes South and Southeast Asia. Bangladesh government is currently working with number of proposals on connecting South, Southeast and East Asia. The country is taking the big role as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina mentioned Bangladesh wants to take lead role regarding connectivity while connecting South, East and Southeast Asia. According to the IMF study the nominal GDP of Bangladesh will be US \$1044 billion in 2034 from current US \$174 billion. So, the economy will grow. And the economy will grow depending on its strength to connect with rest of the world including the US. The growth will continue to move around 6.5 percent to 7 percent in next 20 years. In terms of remittances, by 2034 Bangladesh will annually receive US \$44 billion from current US \$17 billion. That means migration will continue to play an important role along with trade and other issues for Bangladesh.

He quoted from Price Housekeepers forecast, “By 2030, Bangladesh will be one of the top 30 countries in terms of size of real GDP. Bangladesh will overtake countries like Malaysia, Australia and Netherlands to be the 23rd largest economy of the world by 2050”. That is how probably Bangladesh would feature out economically. As long as the risks in terms governance can be managed, rule of law and in terms of how the economy and politics Bangladesh are managed, will determine whether the economy will be bigger or not than those of Australia, Malaysia and Netherlands. But Bangladesh looks forward to that. And in this endeavour, Bangladesh-United States relations will continue to feature out very prominent. U.S. is a huge market for us. But the relationship is much deeper, much warmer and much matured than that. Over the years, it is enough matured to understand each other much better both diplomatically, politically and economically and it will continue to grow. He concluded his remarks by again thanking Undersecretary Mr. Shannon.

Concluding Remarks by the Chair: 13 December 2015



Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad, Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS, greeted all diplomats, distinguished guests and especially thanked HE Mr. Thomas A. Shannon, Undersecretary for Political Affairs Designate and U.S. department of State. Ambassador Ahmad said that Bangladesh has been enjoying

very good relations of friendship and cooperation with the US. The Bangladesh-US Partnership Dialogue includes issues related to labour, regional connectivity, climate change and food security. Simultaneously, Bangladesh-US Security Dialogue also touches upon a broad range of topics including peacekeeping, counter-terrorism, cyber security, military to military cooperation, strategic priorities and other global and regional issues. He stated that Mr. Shannon's visit to Bangladesh prior to formally taking up his important new assignment is a clear indication of the special importance the US attaches to Bangladesh.

Ambassador Ahmad wrapped up the seminar and noted that there are problems between the two countries. But disagreement and problems will always be there even between the best of partners. It is important that parties are able to engage continuously with a view to narrowing down the areas of disagreement and strengthening the areas of agreement. The dialogues at different levels between Bangladesh and the US are aimed at taking their relations to a new height. From his point of view, if this process of engagement continues and in spite of our asymmetries in terms of power and capacities – economic, social, cultural and military, both countries will be able to work together continuously on the basis of mutual understanding, respect, benefit and equality of treatment. Finally, he thanked everyone for participating in the seminar.