



**PRS Implementation Forum Meeting (PIFM)
Dhaka, 15-17 November 2005**

Statement of Bangladesh Local Consultative Group (LCG)

Delivered by:
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1. This statement presents the view of the LCG membership on what we see as a reformed relationship with Bangladesh. The main features of this new relationship are that GOB now leads the dialogue on development with the international community; and we now have the PRSP as the framework for our collective efforts.
2. The LCG congratulates the GOB for its approval of its PRSP vision, *Unlocking the Potential National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction*. We have been looking forward to this moment for the last two development forums. We hope that the approval of the PRSP signifies the entire country's ownership and commitment to addressing the root causes of poverty and also delivering the rates of growth that will be essential if poverty reduction is to be possible. It is encouraging that the GOB has included other partners in the forum such as civil society and the private sector as they have critical roles to play in achieving the goals outlined in the PRSP. This inclusive approach is particularly important for the LCG as our ongoing relationship is with the nation of Bangladesh and our obligation is to the people of Bangladesh – regardless of political changes.
3. The delivery of the PRSP signifies an enormous amount of work. However, the next challenge, implementation, requires even greater effort. The PRSP itself notes that "Implementation has proved to be the bane of policy and programme initiatives on poverty reduction." This was a major theme of the 2004 Bangladesh Development Forum and remains a key challenge. Results are not achieved by well prepared plans, but by concerted efforts to implement those plans.
4. We aim to use the PIFM agenda prepared by GOB to renew discussion on how the international community can best support Bangladesh to achieve the goals and targets outlined in the PRSP. There are many elements that will make for a productive partnership, but there are two that the LCG development partners believe are particularly critical for success; namely commitment and openness.

5. Regarding commitment, we must all do our utmost to fulfill the agreements made at this forum. The LCG members are committed to making the PRSP a success. In practical terms, this means that we will align our individual and collective programmes to the PRSP. We will provide financial assistance to complement Bangladesh's own budget and the reform efforts needed to achieve the targets outlined in the PRSP and to achieve the MDGs.
6. In the spirit of this partnership, we hope that discussion over the next two days will identify concrete actions and benchmarks, with clear timelines, for implementing the PRSP. We look to the GOB for leadership in this, and hope that all partners will endorse these timelines and benchmarks. In addition, the LCG development partners are prepared to suggest practical courses of action.
7. In order to move toward this goal, we must be prepared for a constructive and open dialogue. In the past, disagreement over the context of, and constraints to, development in Bangladesh has upset the partnership between the GOB and the LCG development partners. If the PIFM is to be a success, and our renewed relationship is to develop, some ground needs to be given by both sides.
8. As friends and partners of Bangladesh, we should not ignore the environment in which PRSP implementation will take place. On the one hand, Bangladesh has much to be proud of and the LCG development partners do recognize the country's accomplishments. Growth has been impressive. However it is worth mentioning that the broader political and economic context may impact on the country's ability to achieve the goals set forth in the PRSP.
9. In the spirit of openness, the LCG members would like to highlight the significance of the need to effectively address extremism, to strengthen democratic practices and institutions, overcome political gridlock and to create a favorable environment for investments. It is clear; the challenge to addressing these constraints is not solely the responsibility of the Government, but for each and every element of the entire country. To this end, cooperation between Government, civil society, private sector and political parties is imperative.
10. We should be willing and able to speak frankly about the constraints to PRSP implementation, including poor governance and corruption. The PRSP offers a solid start to this discussion as it publicly acknowledges these constraints, and specifies governance priorities, namely a) Improving implementation capacity; b) Promoting local governance; c) Strengthening Anti-Corruption Strategy; d) Reforming criminal justice and enhancing access to justice for the poor; and e) Improving sectoral governance. However, merely dwelling on the problems would waste the opportunity offered by the PIFM. We must also offer practical and realistic actions to address these constraints.
11. The Agenda for the five sessions highlights where the emphasis of discussion must be placed. For example, sessions I. "Implementation of PRSP: Agenda for the next 3 years" and V. "Aid Harmonization and Aid Effectiveness" stress the need for a solid operational action plan, and the necessity to more productively utilize the assistance provided. The remaining sessions II. "Social Development, Empowering the Poor and the Vulnerable", III. "Enhancing Competitiveness for Promoting Trade, Investment and Private Sector

Development” and IV. “Promoting Good Governance” pinpoints the key potential constraints.

12. To ensure productive dialogue, the LCG development partners have identified a number of points to be tabled during each session. This has been a collective effort. Though these points will be voiced by a variety of development partners, they represent the collective view of the LCG. The LCG partners have also identified practical approaches for addressing these points raised and are looking forward to an open and honest dialogue on how best to proceed. Implementation will fall on many shoulders: GOB, civil society, private sector and development partners. During discussion, we should aim for a shared responsibility in meeting stated goals.
13. We recognize that all necessary actions detailed in the PRSP cannot be addressed immediately. There are, however, steps that can be taken to achieve short-term successes that will lead to the delivery of longer-term goals. If the PRSP is really to shape our day-to-day business, we particularly need to agree on clear steps for the next twelve months, not least so that we have a basis for reviewing collective progress when we reassemble for PIFM 2006. Of course, commitment to short or long term progress means little without a strong and effective monitoring and evaluation framework. We envisage a joint mechanism, led by Government with significant support of the LCG members, for PRSP monitoring and evaluation that includes all parties involved in implementation. Agreement on PRSP monitoring and evaluation is one of the most critical outputs to be reached during the PIFM.
14. In conclusion, the LCG welcomes the reformed dialogue between Bangladesh and development partners under the leadership of the Government, and we look forward to future annual forums to review our collective progress in implementing the PRSP.