

Agreed

Joint Press Statement
Bangladesh-Bhutan Foreign Office Consultations
Dhaka, Bangladesh

1. At the invitation of H.E. Mr. Md. Shahidul Haque, Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh, H.E. Mr. Yeshey Dorji, Foreign Secretary of Bhutan is on an official visit to Bangladesh from 1-3 April 2013. During the visit, the two Foreign Secretaries held the First Consultations between the governments of Bangladesh and Bhutan under the aegis of the Memorandum of Understanding that was signed by them on 1 April 2013.
2. The official Consultations were held today (2 April 2013) in an atmosphere of warmth and cordiality signifying the existing excellent relationship between the two countries. The two Foreign Secretaries led their respective delegations to the talks.
3. The Foreign Secretaries reviewed the entire range of bilateral relations between the two countries. They noted that the exchanges at the highest level including the visit of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to Bhutan in November 2009 and the visits of His Majesty the King to Bangladesh in March 2011 and February 2013 presented both sides with opportunities to explore available synergies in various areas and infuse further impetus towards deepening and strengthening the relations between the two countries.
4. The two Foreign Secretaries also noted that the MoU on Foreign Office Consultations between Bangladesh and Bhutan would establish a formal mechanism to follow up on the decisions of these high level exchanges and enable them to take stock of the existing state of the relationship, identify areas that needed attention and explore new avenues of cooperation for mutual benefit.
5. The two sides expressed their satisfaction with the current state of Bangladesh-Bhutan relations and discussed ways and means to further intensify their mutually beneficial cooperation particularly in the areas of trade and commerce, investment, connectivity and transit, agriculture, education and human resource development, culture and tourism. They also discussed possibilities of cooperation in the sub-regional and regional context as well as UN and other multi-lateral forums.
6. The two Foreign Secretaries welcomed the holding of the Commerce Secretary level talks in March 2013 and July 2012 which gave both sides the opportunity to have open and constructive discussions on further enhancement of bilateral trade which is far below the potential. They noted that the two sides had discussed issues related to deepening of tariff concessions, removal of non-tariff barriers and other trade facilitation measures. They also welcomed the notification of additional Land Customs Stations (LCSs) of Dalu-Nakugaon and Gobraura and Koraituli in Haluaghat opposite Ghoshuapara in India in addition to the existing Burimari-Chengrabandha and Tamabil-Dawki LCSs. Recalling the offer of the government of Bangladesh to the Royal government of Bhutan for use of Chittagong and Mongla ports as well as the Lalmonirhat and Syedpur airports, the two Foreign Secretaries also welcomed the decisions of the two Commerce Secretaries to form a Joint Working Group for finalizing a Transit Agreement and its Protocols and formation of a Joint Committee to study the utilization of the Protocol on

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Inland Water Transit and Trade between Bangladesh and India for transportation of Bhutanese cargo. The two Foreign Secretaries also discussed the initiative of Bangladesh to discuss connectivity issues in a sub-regional context involving Bangladesh, Bhutan and India.

7. The Bangladesh side agreed to consider Bhutan's request for international telecom redundancy connectivity. In this regard, the Bangladesh side suggested that a technical delegation from Bhutan could visit Bangladesh for further discussion.
8. The two Foreign Secretaries took note of the possibilities of cooperation in water resource management including in flood forecasting and mitigation. Referring to the hydro-power potential of Bhutan and Bangladesh's interest to obtain electricity from Bhutan, they also noted the forthcoming trilateral consultations in the sub-regional context involving Bangladesh, Bhutan and India on hydropower development and water resource management. They expressed hope for a successful outcome of the consultations.
9. The two Foreign Secretaries agreed that the relationship between the two sides can be further consolidated by forging closer institutional linkages between the two countries for sharing of experiences and best practices.
10. Recalling the number of students from Bhutan who are pursuing higher studies in Bangladesh under SAARC quota as well as beyond it in the public and private institutions, the two Foreign Secretaries agreed to further explore the means to enhance the opportunities for Bhutanese students to study in Bangladesh.
11. The two Foreign Secretaries welcomed the formation of a Joint Technical Team between officials of the Ministries of Agriculture to explore cooperation in this sector under the aegis of the MoU signed between the two Ministers of Agriculture in September 2012.
12. The two Foreign Secretaries emphasized the need to strengthen the role of SAARC, BIMSTEC and other regional organisations to exploit the existing potentials for the benefit of the peoples of the region. They also agreed to enhance cooperation on the issues related to climate change, sustainable development, post-2015 development agenda and promotion of interests of LDCs. The two Foreign Secretaries expressed satisfaction at the existing excellent cooperation between the two sides at the UN and other multilateral forums and agreed to further enhance engagement in this regard.
13. The Foreign Secretary of Bhutan invited the Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh to visit Bhutan at a mutually convenient date for the next round of consultation.

Dhaka, 02 April 2013