

**Statement of Mr. Ramesh Chandra Sen, Hon'ble Minister of Water Resources, Government of Bangladesh at Sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (High-level Segment Part-2: 28 November 2012)**

Excellencies

Distinguished Panellists

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Afternoon to all,

I feel honoured to be present here in this high level segment of the 6<sup>th</sup> Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. I thank the organizers for inviting me and giving me the opportunity to share the views with you on such a vital issue which is increasingly becoming a cause of conflict as well as source of cooperation. The topic is very vital for sustainable water resources management of our country.

As you all know that Bangladesh is the lowermost riparian country of the three mighty Himalayan Rivers namely the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna. There are more than 400 rivers in Bangladesh of which 57 are transboundary rivers - 54 are common with India and 3 are common with Myanmar. In fact 51 rivers common between Bangladesh and India are within the catchment of the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna.

The catchment area of these 3 mighty rivers are about 1.72 million square kilometre of which only 7% lies in Bangladesh. It is worth

mentioning that the water of these rivers shapes the live and livelihood of millions of people of Bangladesh.

It is observed that the Convention provides in item number-2(c) under article-2 of part-1 for reasonable and equitable use of transboundary waters. But there is no mention of relevant factors for quantifying equitable and reasonable utilization of waters of transboundary rivers. We propose that the Convention may include related factors with specific weightage towards arriving at reasonable and equitable sharing of waters of transboundary rivers. Besides, we need a legally binding mechanism for development, management and sharing of waters of transboundary river at basin level.

I would like to mention here that the availability of water in Bangladesh widely varies during monsoon and dry season. About 80% of annual water availability occurs during monsoon. As a result Bangladesh suffers from devastation of flood during monsoon and faces scarcity of water during dry season. The sustainable planning and development of water resources of Bangladesh virtually depends on the equitable sharing and management of the transboundary rivers. Bangladesh, alone can not manage the water of transboundary rivers as it is the lowermost riparian country. It is therefore, imperative to ensure active cooperation of the co-riparian countries for sustainable management of transboundary rivers.

With a view to sustainable management of the transboundary rivers, Bangladesh has been working towards establishment of Joint Bodies like River Basin Organizations comprising representatives of co-riparian countries using the framework of water convention for improvement of transboundary cooperation at the basin level.

Our region offers vast opportunities for optimal water resources development and management through collaborative efforts.

Cooperative development can make it possible to achieve multiple benefits like hydro-power generation, dry season flow augmentation, resulting irrigation expansion and increase of food production, preservation of eco-system and water quality, mitigation of flood hazards, maintain navigability, help adapt to climate change effect etc. These would bring about the social and economic transformation of the region. We therefore propose for a globally excepted legal framework of terms of reference for establishment and effective operation of the River Basin Organizations.

Thank you all.