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Remarks at the Independence Day Reception Ambassador James F. Moriarty

DHAKA, JUNE 3 -- Following is the text of remarks by Ambassador James F. Moriarty at the Independence Day Reception on June 3.

(Begin text)

Dr. Dipu Moni, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, distinguished guests:
assalamu-aleikum and good evening.

Thank you all for coming tonight to honor the birth of the United States of America. I would especially like to thank our distinguished Chief Guest, Her Excellency Dr. Dipu Moni, for joining us tonight. She holds a Masters in Public Health from Johns Hopkins University in Maryland and has also completed conflict resolution and negotiation training from Harvard University. I am proud of the leaders, American and Bangladeshi, who have come out of the American higher education system, and I am very pleased to have Dr. Moni here for this occasion.

Tonight we stand on the threshold of new relationship between America and Muslims worldwide. Tomorrow at 4:10pm Dhaka time, President Barack Obama will be delivering an address in Cairo outlining his goal of engaging the Muslim world based on mutual interests and mutual respect. I feel proud of our President's commitment to open dialogue and mutual understanding, and I hope you will all take the time to watch the speech tomorrow.

Tonight we celebrate the 233rd anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. It is a document that fills Americans with pride. Every American child can recognize the famous lines: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

In this past year, the children of America learned what those lines really mean. “All men are created equal”—this is a founding principle of the United States, and with the election of the first African-American president, we saw the fulfillment of that promise.

In 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King spoke of his dream that one day his children would “not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” That day has come.

Americans judged President Obama on the content of his character and proved that change is possible. The United States is not a nation with a perfect past, but last year we learned that there is more that unites us than divides us. We share the promise of a democracy of citizens, all with equal rights under the law.

This year was also a momentous one for democracy in Bangladesh. I felt fortunate to be here to witness the holding of free and fair national elections. I saw people lined up for hours at polling centers, eager to make their votes count. I saw the elderly waiting in line because they did not want to miss their chance to vote. I saw people in wheelchairs carried up stairs into polling centers by fellow voters. I saw people determined to exercise their right to shape the future of their country. I congratulate the people of Bangladesh for making a smooth and peaceful transition back to democracy.

Unfortunately, not all change is good. In the last year, we have seen the greatest global economic challenges in generations. The world faces the rising threats of unregulated nuclear weaponry and global climate change. Here in Bangladesh, we saw the tragic violence of the Bangladesh Rifles mutiny. To face difficult times, all people of good will must stand together. The only way forward is through increased mutual understanding and cooperation around the world.

One thing that has not changed is the strong relationship between the United States and Bangladesh. Since I arrived here just over a year ago, I have been talking about three Ds: Democracy, Development, and Denial of Space to terrorists. These are the core pillars of our relationship, and we have made progress in all three areas.

Bangladesh and the United States both showed an unflagging commitment to democratic ideals in last year’s elections. Additionally, the U.S. government has funded training in administration and lawmaking for Bangladeshi government officials and

Members of Parliament. In the area of development, the U.S. has nearly doubled assistance to Bangladesh in the aftermath of Cyclone Sidr. This year alone we will provide \$160 million in assistance. Just as important, the U.S. remains the largest market for Bangladesh's exports and the second largest source of remittances. The U.S. has also been a strong partner for Bangladesh in areas crucial to combating terrorism, such as law enforcement training and legal development.

Bangladesh faces many questions right now: how will politicians move beyond a past of partisanship and bitterness to work for the good of all Bangladeshis? How can the country attract investment and expand economic opportunities? How can the government keep citizens safe and borders secure?

The United States will continue to work with the people and government of Bangladesh as you address these questions. We will work together as fellow members of the global community to overcome challenges and create a better world for future generations.

It has been a historic year for Bangladesh, and I am honored to have been here with all of you witnessing it.

Thank you, and I hope you enjoy the evening.

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**As prepared for delivery*

GR/2009