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**REMARKS BY  
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA  
MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT FOR PROMOTION OF  
ILO CORE LABOR STANDARDS AND  
BANGLADESH LABOR ACT, 2006  
SIGNING CEREMONY**

**BANGLADESH FROZEN FOODS EXPORTERS ASSOCIATION  
BANGLADESH SHRIMP AND FISH FOUNDATION  
AMERICAN CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL LABOR SOLIDARITY  
DHAKA  
MARCH 24, 2013**

Ujjal Bikash Dutta, Secretary, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock

Mahubub Ahmed, Secretary Ministry of Commerce

Mikail Shipar, Secretary, Ministry of Labor and Employment

Shahidul Haque, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Alonzo Suson, Country Program Director, Solidarity Center

Md. Amin Ullah, President, Bangladesh Frozen Foods Exporters Association

Syed Mahmudul Huq, Chairman, Bangladesh Shrimp and Fish Foundation

Colleagues and friends

Asalaam 'malaikum and good afternoon

I am the happiest person in this room.

Last May, I visited Khulna, toured a shrimp processing plant, visited shrimp farms and met with the Bangladesh Frozen Foods Exporters Association over a dinner of the world's biggest and finest shrimp.

The dinner was memorable for reasons beyond the incredible food. My BFFEA hosts presented to me their vision of explosive growth in the frozen foods exports industry with exports increasing from \$600 million annually to over \$1.5 billion a year.

... and I shared with my hosts my vision of Bangladesh as the next Asian Tiger, a vision that includes a major role for the frozen foods industry. Waiting until after I had gobbled up the last of the shrimp, I challenged BFFEA as to whether ... and I quote ... “BFFEA is able to brand Bangladesh shrimp as fair labor trade, meaning no child labor, less contract labor, good safety conditions, a proper working environment, fair wages, and recognition of workers’ right to organize.” (end quote)

I challenged whether the industry could meet international hygiene standards so Bangladesh frozen foods could recapture access to the American market.

We discussed how exports to America had dropped from 25% of Bangladesh’s exports to about 4%, and subsequently we have seen Bangladeshi frozen foods exports back up as godowns overflow with unsold product.

Today, we see the industry’s response to those challenges, discussions and exchanges of last May ... and it is most encouraging, most promising. Full implementation of this MOA will benefit both owners and workers as Bangladesh increases its global market share of frozen seafood produced by workers who labor with dignity, respect and increased productivity.

Today, with the signing of this historic MOA, Bangladesh has made clear its intent to deal effectively with the labor issues that have long constrained the industry, and I hope this agreement also will spur the industry to overcome the hygiene challenges that have precluded preferential access to the American market for Bangladeshi frozen foods exports.

I commend all parties to this MOA for their success in concluding this agreement. I know the path to this signing ceremony has been long and arduous, but your tenacity, goodwill and determination to succeed have paid off as we gather today for this historic event.

Of course, challenges lie ahead. Management and labor will need to engage in the spirit of this agreement, in the spirit of fairness, cooperation, problem solving. The Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanism provided in this MOA is a positive sign of commitment to resolving inevitable problems equitably and efficiently. I applaud the creation of the Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanism; its successful implementation would serve as a model for other industries.

I applaud, too, the deep support of the Ministries of Fisheries and Livestock, Commerce, and Labor in facilitating this agreement. Without this support, none of us would be here today. I

give special thanks to the respective secretaries for their personal engagement in making this MOA reality.

The timing of this agreement could not be better. I am sure that my good colleague and friend Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque shares with me the pleasure that this MOA was successfully concluded before the hearing in Washington later this week on whether Bangladesh should retain its trade privileges under the Generalized System of Preferences. Today's MOA concretely demonstrates the resolve of Bangladeshi government, business sector and workers to ensure protection of workers' rights and workplace safety. This MOA is an important element of Bangladesh's response to the concerns raised in the GSP petition regarding labor rights and working conditions in both the RMG and shrimp industries.

I am proud that America, too, has played a key role in realizing the MOA that we celebrate today. Starting years ago, USAID has engaged with shrimp processing plants to increase understanding of and compliance with Bangladeshi labor law by the workers, owners, managers and contractors. America has also supported the Solidarity Center, which has played an important role in realizing today's MOA.

To address concerns relating to hygiene and food safety, America endeavors to increase the capacity of the Quality Control Laboratory of the Department of Fisheries. In addition, America is working with farmers to increase their awareness of the need to keep shrimp free of contamination. We also support the good work of the Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute, which is working hard to identify all sources of antibiotic contamination of farmed shrimp.

Finally, America has worked with the Economics Relations Division of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Commerce to make available Taka resources to help fund some key activities envisioned in this MOA, as well as complementary work by the ILO. The full programming of these resources will take place in the coming weeks.

I believe that all of us ... Bangladesh government, shrimp plant owners and managers, workers, farmers, researchers, and outside friends of Bangladesh, like America ... all of us, working together, can help Bangladesh regain and expand its share of the global frozen foods market, thus realizing the vision of expanding frozen foods exports to \$1.5 billion a year, thus realizing the major role of the frozen foods sector in making the vision of Bangladesh as the next Asian Tiger, the Royal Bengal Tiger, a reality.

I said at the outset that I am the happiest person in this room; I think now you understand why.

Thank you.

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*\*As prepared for delivery*

**GR/ 2013**