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**REMARKS
BY
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FOR World Environment Day**

Student Celebration at Independent University Bangladesh (IUB)

June 5, 2016

Thank you for that kind introduction.

I am very happy to be here with the students of Independent University Bangladesh to celebrate World Environment Day. Environmental problems respect no borders. Addressing them and achieving sustainable management of natural resources worldwide requires the cooperation and commitment of all countries. This is a real opportunity to generate positive environmental action in the coming year.

As you know, Bangladesh, located at the confluence of the Ganges, the Brahmaputra, and the Meghna Rivers, is particularly vulnerable to climate change. The coastal zone faces flooding, erosion, rising sea levels, and cyclonic storm surges. These challenges are made worse by the change in climate. Greater variability in rainfall is expected to increase the number and severity of floods and droughts in the coming decades. Rising sea levels, storm surges, flood damage, and saltwater intrusion threaten human lives and livelihoods through diminishing freshwater supplies. It is important to respond proactively to protect the people and livelihood of Bangladesh and the globe.

I am proud of the U.S. Government's long collaboration with IUB and our close relationship with the International Center for Climate Change and Development here. The Gobeshona [goh-beh-show-nah] Young Researcher Program has just finished its first year. Gobeshana is a collaboration between USAID and the International Center for Climate Change and Development that develops Bangladesh's capacity to conduct climate change research. I want to highlight a few success stories. Istiaxh Ahmed is studying the adaptation strategies of some of the poorest and most vulnerable communities in Bangladesh. Shougat Nazbin Khan is

researching small-scale wind solar hybrid systems. Tanzinia Khanom is researching the impacts of climate change-induced salinity intrusion on agriculture. Research like this is so important to build Bangladesh's capacity to be proactive in the face of environmental challenges. I hope that all the budding researchers in the room see Gobeshana as a call to action – you do not need to wait to make a difference on climate change.

The key event of the program is the annual Gobeshona Conference for Research on Climate Change in Bangladesh, which brings together high level researchers around the world to share their findings on the impacts of climate change in Bangladesh.

No nation can face climate change alone. There has been tremendous movement on environmental issues in the last year including the adoption of the sustainable development goals to protect our planet by the United Nations, and the historic Paris Agreement on Climate Change signed by a record 175 countries on April 22, Earth Day. At that event, U.N. Secretary General said “we are in a race against time.” He is right, but we also have a golden opportunity to protect our global environment as an all-out international effort.

June is a special month because this is when the United States celebrates National Oceans Month. The oceans cover 70 percent of the Earth's surface. They are a natural treasure, a source of food and energy, and a foundation for our way of life. This month, we reaffirm our responsibility to keep our oceans and coastal ecosystems healthy and resilient. We remember our obligations to good ocean stewardship.

The U.S. Department of State will host world leaders in Washington later this year for the third annual “Our Ocean Conference.” Participants will be tackling thorny challenges to our oceans' wellbeing and will discuss measures to protect and conserve wildlife through sustainable fishing practices and the establishment of marine protected areas. One model they can learn from is Bangladesh's “Swatch of No Ground,” which is a habitat for the endangered fin whale, five species of endangered dolphins, and a host of other marine wildlife.

Now that all may sound very technical and a bit daunting. Here is where you come in: you will devise the solutions to these problems. I applaud the IUB Environment Club for taking this initiative not only to dive into the science but also to weave it with culture and to give us the imagery of what is happening to our earth through photography. On this World Environment Day, you have given us images of the great challenge climate change poses. Tomorrow and

beyond, we will work together and find new solutions. And we look to your generation to carry forward the good works to protect our planet.

Thank you again for inviting me to join you in celebration of World Environment Day.
Onek dhonnobad. Bhalo takben.

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