

2nd International Conference on Bangladesh Environment
(ICBEN 2000)
December 19-21, 2002

Dhaka Declaration on Bangladesh Environment, 2002
(Dhaka Declaration 2002)

Preamble

The Second International Conference on Bangladesh Environment, (ICBEN 2002), was held on December 19-21, 2002. It was organized by *Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA)*, with special assistance from *Bangladesh Environment Network (BEN)*, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), and the Department of Geography and Environment, University of Dhaka. About one hundred and twenty scientific papers, covering all major environmental problems of Bangladesh, were selected for presentation in twenty-four *Expert Sessions*. In addition, twenty-nine *General Sessions* were held on a wide range of environmental issues. Also there were five *Special General Sessions*, including two plenary sessions.

The first ICBEN, held on January 14-15, 2000, had adopted *Dhaka Declaration on Bangladesh Environment 2000* (in short *Dhaka Declaration 2000*). The broad purpose of ICBEN-2002 was to analyze the current environmental situation and consider tasks for the coming years in the light of *Dhaka Declaration 2000*. The scientific papers and deliberations in various Expert, General, and Special General sessions in many cases reaffirmed the analyses and recommendations contained in *Dhaka Declaration 2000*. This was not surprising given that *Dhaka Declaration 2000* was a very comprehensive document, and hence it was not expected that its analyses will become redundant and all its recommendations will be implemented in the span of three years that passed between ICBEN-2000 and ICBEN-2002. The *Dhaka Declaration 2002* therefore retains much of the analyses and recommendations of *Dhaka Declaration 2000*. However, *Dhaka Declaration 2002* goes beyond, and it is a complete, self-contained document reflecting the current environmental situation of Bangladesh. It extends the analyses and recommendations where the situation has changed and/or relevant objectives of Dhaka Declaration 2000 have already been achieved. *Dhaka Declaration 2002* therefore supercedes Dhaka Declaration 2000 and is not an addendum. It begins with issues that require action at the international level and then moves on to issues that require action at regional, national, community, and individual levels.

I. ACTION AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL.

Being conscious that the overall environment of Bangladesh is threatened by various global activities;

Noting that although Bangladesh's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions is insignificant it will still be severely affected by climate change resulting in uncertainties in weather pattern that may cause both floods and droughts, and significant rise in sea level due to global warming that could inundate the low lying areas of the coastal belt;

Noting also that although Bangladesh's contribution to Ozone layer depletion is insignificant it will nevertheless face its consequences;

Being concerned that rapid growth in industrialization in the region could generate Acid Rain in Bangladesh;

Recognizing that UN sponsored discussion on sustainable development has progressed from Rio Earth Summit of 1992 to Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) of 2002 and has become the major forum for dissemination of ideas regarding environmental issues; and

Recognizing that the issue of environmental protection is intertwined with issues of trade and investment and recognizing that issues of negotiation are becoming more complex as manifested by advent of trade in carbon emission rights;

It is recommended that

1. Bangladesh plays an active role and be a vigilant participant in negotiations and reviews of various international conventions, treaties, and protocols specially those concerned with global climate change, ozone layer depletion and acid rain.
2. Bangladesh pays careful attention to negotiations conducted under the auspices of WTO, to strike a right balance between her need to increase traditionally measured gains from trade and her need to protect environment.
3. Proper implementation of all international protocols to which Bangladesh is signatory is ensured and towards this a review of national legal and policy regime is carried out.
4. Bangladesh builds up national capacity for successful international negotiations. In doing so, Bangladesh may pay attention to the capacity of the NGOs and the civil society, including that of the non-resident Bangladeshis (NRB).

II. ACTION AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL.

Being aware that the catchment basins of major rivers of Bangladesh lie mostly in her neighboring countries;

Being aware that deforestation in the Himalayan region means disaster for Bangladesh in terms of increased flooding and sedimentation;

Affirming the urgent need for a basin-wise development of water resources of the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna region comprising India, China, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh;

Being aware that in addition to cooperation at the government level, cooperation at the level of people and civil society is necessary for proper resolution of water-sharing and other conflicts;

It is recommended that

1. All out efforts are made for ensuring a basin approach for management of water resources of the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna region especially for flood management and to halt deforestation.
2. Existing Joint River Commission includes China, Nepal and Bhutan for sharing regional problems and formulating policies for mutual benefit of the member countries.
3. Efforts are made to enhance cooperation among pro-environment forces of the countries of this region.

III. ACTION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

General Issues

Being certain that Bangladesh needs to protect her environment not despite costs in terms of economic growth but in order to achieve economic growth and sustainable development;

Recognizing that poverty in certain cases leads to environment-damaging behavior, and that economic well being can facilitate better appreciation of environmental amenities;

Being at the same time cognizant that poverty should not be an excuse for inaction against pollution;

Recognizing that, given the already high population density, further growth in population size puts severe strain on Bangladesh's environment;

Being convinced that protection of environment should not be viewed as a stand-alone activity, instead it should be an inherent attribute of the entire range of development efforts, encompassing all sectors of the economy and all facets of national life;

Noting that the priority given to protection of environment should find adequate reflection in the country's budget, settlement planning and updating of land use policy;

Observing that more research needs to be done on some of the environmental issues;

Recognizing that poor governance in general is one of the root causes of continued environmental deterioration in the country; and

Observing that training to the government officials on environment issues does not make them committed for improvement of environmental solutions.

It is recommended that

1. Bangladesh pursues an economic development strategy that gives priority to poverty reduction.
2. Bangladesh pursues a land use and settlement policy, which ensures sustainable developments.
3. Bangladesh continues her population planning efforts and does not suffer from any complacency from the recent modest decrease in population growth rate.
4. Bangladesh views population planning not as a biological task but as a task of social transformation focusing, among other, on uplifting the life of women through provision of education, healthcare, income earning opportunities, and equal social standing with men.
5. Bangladesh sets protection of environment as an overall developmental goal, permeating all specific development projects. All officials of government and semi-government organizations, both at the central and regional level, be meaningfully trained and made to understand the overall developmental goal.
6. The national budget be made to reflect the goal of environmental protection. If necessary Green Tax be imposed on polluting consumption and production activities.

7. Bangladesh increases the stature and budgetary resources of the Ministry of Environment so that the Ministry and the Department of Environment become capable of handling difficult problems of environmental protection at home and complex negotiations on environmental issues in the international arena.
8. The entire public is made aware of the overall goal of environmental protection. Cooperation is sought from all sections of the society, including professional and various socio-cultural organizations, organizations representing women, students, and youth. In particular, teachers of all levels, religious leaders, such as *Imams* of *Masjids*, and other grass-root social leaders are also enlisted in the national effort to save the environment.
9. The entire media, particularly the electronic media, is mobilized for the pro-environmental effort. The traditional cultural activities, such as *Jatra*, *Jaree-gan*, *Saree-gan*, etc. are also used in the campaign to save the environment.
10. Particular emphasis is given on the role of women in protection of the environment.
11. The curriculum of education at all stages is made to reflect the national goal of environmental protection.
12. More resources are earmarked for research on environmental issues.
13. Bangladesh takes effective steps to improve the quality of governance in general so that policies and projects related to environment are also better implemented.
14. Bangladesh improves the coordination among different ministries and agencies who have roles in controlling pollution.
15. Local governments are strengthened and given more jurisdiction and power to control pollution in their respective areas.

Ground water Contamination-Arsenic Poisoning

Being concerned about the level of arsenic contamination of drinking water from wells almost all over Bangladesh and prevalence of arsenic affected patients in acute arsenic problem areas;

Being concerned about insignificant progress made in the past years in confronting the arsenic challenge;

Being aware that in addition to arsenic other heavy metals may also be a source of concern with regard to ground water;

Apprehending that donor assistance for arsenic mitigation is not used properly;

Being concerned that quarters with vested interest are trying to commercialize the arsenic problem and reap unethical profits;

Being aware that Bangladesh's excessive dependence on ground water for irrigation is aggravating the arsenic problem, whereas the country's enormous surface water potentiality remains largely unutilized;

Observing therefore that the long run solution of the arsenic problem of Bangladesh cannot be achieved without correcting the country's overall water development policy;

It is recommended that

1. The public throughout the country is made aware of the danger of drinking arsenic contaminated tube-well water and of the alternative arsenic-free sources of water.

2. Screening and monitoring of tube-wells for arsenic contamination is intensified.
3. Proper and affordable treatment is made available to the people already affected by *arsenicosis*. Skills of doctors and health workers are enhanced in diagnosing arsenicosis and in providing medical and health care to arsenic patients.
4. Arsenic free rainwater is harvested for drinking purposes.
5. The aid money provided by donor organizations is not squandered and instead utilized properly for meaningful, low cost, indigenous solutions of the arsenic problem.
6. Efforts to commercialize the arsenic problem and reap unethical profits are thwarted.
7. For the long term solution, the connection between the arsenic problem and overall water development strategy is recognized, and steps are taken to move away from the dependence on ground water and make better utilization of the immense surface water resources of the country.

Protection of Rivers and Other Water Bodies

Noting that water development strategy of Bangladesh has so far been characterized by attempts to cordon off floodplains from adjoining rivers by creating polders;

Observing that this strategy has not proved successful and has rather aggravated problems of flood, drainage, soil quality, sanitation, preservation of fresh water fish stock, functioning of waterways, temperature balance, etc.;

Realizing that rivers and surface water bodies of Bangladesh currently suffer from the three-fold problem of reduced water flow, encroachment, and pollution;

Being aware that overcoming the problem of reduced flow requires regional cooperation;

Being conscious of the particular importance of wetlands around cities as flood retention areas;

Noting that public campaign persuaded the government to demolish many illegal structures along the Buriganga River;

It is recommended that

1. The 'Cordon approach' be abandoned and instead rivers and other surface water bodies of Bangladesh are preserved and developed by adopting the ecology and environment friendly 'Open approach'.
2. Effective negotiations are conducted with India and Nepal to stop further diversion of water in the upstream reaches of Bangladesh Rivers and to restore some of the lost flow;
3. Efforts are made to retain the excess monsoon water flow inside Bangladesh in order to augment the lean water flow;
4. Protection of *haors* and *baors* is undertaken, and their conversion into arable land is prohibited.
5. The campaign to demolish illegal encroaching structures along *Buriganga* river is implemented in full. The campaign to free rivers and other water bodies from encroachments is spread all across the country.

6. Environmental impact studies are carried out for projects affecting rivers and other water bodies and views of the local people about the proposed projects are sought and given proper weight.
7. Over drainage or complete drainage of wetlands is prohibited and obstruction of drainage channels is prevented through appropriate legal and administrative steps.
8. Consolidation of rural habitations is encouraged for flood management and other developmental purposes.

Surface Water Contamination

Being aware that dependence on chemical fertilizer and pesticides for higher crop yields is contributing to surface water pollution;

Observing that industrial plants set up indiscriminately along rivers are another major source of surface water pollution;

Noting that Export Processing Zones (EPZ) set up in different parts of the country are adding seriously to the problem of surface water pollution;

Realizing that lack of proper sanitary practices is another major source of surface water contamination;

Noting that use of water sealed sanitary latrines is picking up in rural areas;

It is recommended that

1. Reduction in dependence on chemical fertilizer and pesticides is achieved through adoption of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and Integrated Plant Nutrition Management (IPNS).
2. Use of undesirable fertilizers is discouraged and ban on undesirable pesticide is strictly enforced.
3. Organic agriculture is encouraged, and many traditional, environment-friendly agricultural practices are promoted.
4. Campaign for use of water sealed sanitary latrines for ensuring proper sanitation in rural areas, is further intensified and a target for full coverage by 2004 is achieved and discharge of untreated urban sewage is stopped.
5. Steps are taken to prevent industrial effluents from polluting water of the surrounding surface water bodies.

Air Pollution

Taking note of governmental steps to phase out Two Stroke Engine Vehicles (TSEV) and to eradicate old and defective vehicles from the city streets;

Observing the progress made in making use of unleaded gasoline universal in the country;

Realizing that traffic congestion and idling of vehicles also increase air pollution;

Acknowledging that mass transportation in cities is a must for reduction of traffic congestion and that there are plans for building rail transit, ring road and circular waterway for Dhaka;

Recognizing that sulfuric emissions from diesel using vehicles are a major source of air pollution;

Observing that in addition to the direct negative impact on human health, air pollution is also potentially threatening to agriculture in the areas surrounding Dhaka.

Recognizing that air pollution is not limited to urban areas, and that brick burning also pollutes air in rural areas and that some steps are taken to reduce environmental hazards created by brick kilns;

Noting that rural air pollution is also caused by use of firewood, cow dung, and other traditional fuels in open-hearth rural household kitchens, and that such pollution is a serious health hazard for rural women;

It is recommended that

1. TSEVs are banned not only from the cities but also from entire Bangladesh including small towns and rural areas;
2. CNG-conversion of *all* vehicles is made the goal, and necessary steps, including setting up of adequate number of CNG filling stations, are taken to achieve this goal.
3. Inspection of emission by vehicles is subjected to severe scrutiny and the policy of disallowing very old and defective vehicles from plying is enforced strictly and everywhere in Bangladesh and the emission standard be made transparent, well developed and public.
4. Emphasis is given on environment–friendly mass transit system, and adoption of private cars as the main mode of transportation is discouraged.
5. In developing mass-transit system, best use is made of the existing infrastructure, such as the functioning and derelict rail tracks, instead of creating entirely new structures. In particular, in view of developed countries’ negative experience with elevated highways, the idea of constructing elevated roads in Dhaka city is discouraged.
6. Steps are taken to ensure supply of natural gas to rural areas to allow both brick kilns and rural household to switch to natural gas as the predominant fuel.
7. Steps are taken to promote use of semi-closed hearths/stoves to mitigate air pollution arising from use of traditional fuels in cooking.

Industrial Waste

Noting that industrial waste has always been an important source of pollution of surrounding landmass, water bodies, and air, as exemplified by the tanneries located in Hazaribag of Dhaka city;

Observing that with setting up of Export Processing Zones (EPZ) in different districts the threat of industrial pollution is now spreading all across the countries;

Realizing that pollution is spreading from industrial enterprises set up outside of EPZs too;

Observing that industrial poultry farming has also become a new source of pollution;

Noting that there are good laws and regulations meant to control pollution by industrial enterprises that are however not implemented properly due to alleged corruption and lack of motivation and accountability;

It is recommended that

1. Effective and immediate measures be taken to relocate the tanneries of Hazaribag area ensuring the measures to prevent environmental pollutions are strictly enforced.
2. Industrial Effluent and Emission Quality Standard Promulgated in 1997 under the Environmental Conservation Act of 1995 is strictly enforced.
3. Industrial poultry farms are also brought under the scope of laws pertaining to industrial waste control.
4. The necessity for further legislation and setting up of environmental courts to enforce the enacted laws be given due consideration.
5. Alleged widespread corruption in conducting environmental impact assessment (EIA) studies is rooted out, and only properly registered professionals are allowed to carry out EIA studies.
5. Industrial environment auditing system is introduced requiring submission of periodical reports on the impact on the environment.
6. Appropriate incentives are given to the industrial enterprises to voluntarily comply with the environmental regulations and at the same time apply the 'polluters pay' principle.
7. Local communities, workers and their trade unions, and the civil society at large are enlisted in ensuring compliance of the relevant regulations by the industrial enterprises.

Household Waste

Noting steps to ban the use of certain types of polythene/plastic bags and recognizing the necessity to strictly enforce this ban and to expand this ban gradually to other types of plastic bags too;

Observing that alternative bio-bags are available and their use can be increased;

Recognizing the local efforts in community based garbage collection and disposal has been successful;

Realizing that dumping sites of solid waste are inadequate, and yet at the same time land is too scarce in Bangladesh to be spared for too many sprawling dumping sites;

Observing that the open dumping of solid waste causes degradation of environment and acts as sources of germs and diseases;

Desirous of ensuring recycling of solid wastes as much as practicable;

Recognizing that waste workers play a good social role in collecting reusable parts of waste, but that their conditions of work are very unhygienic;

Noting that pieces of papers, rags etc collected from bins/streets are coming back to households in the form of paper packets containing food items etc from the shops that carry germs of diseases;

Recognizing the possibility of converting household waste into bio-fertilizer and energy;

It is recommended that

1. The ban on use of certain plastic bags is strictly enforced, and this ban is extended to the use of other types of plastic bags;

2. Use of bags made of jute and other natural fibers and of bio-bags is increased.
3. The metal containers, which lead to traffic congestion and are the sources of environmental pollution be removed and adequate number of dumping sites are constructed, while minimizing as much as possible the area required, for quick and easy disposal of household waste.
4. The dumping sites are kept sanitary and properly lined to prevent pollution of the surrounding area and water bodies through contact and seepage.
5. Priority is given to reuse and recycling of waste from the source of origin. A national campaign is launched to popularize reuse and recycling, including provision of material incentives.
6. Activities of waste pickers are recognized and efforts are made to ensure a hygienic condition for their work in processing waste into reusable goods.
7. Community involvement in primary collection of waste is encouraged. Municipalities are given incentives for proper waste collection, recovery, and reuse.
8. Non-government organizations and private enterprises are also given a role in waste collection, recovery and reuse, where suitable.
9. Serious efforts are made to explore the commercial feasibility of conversion of household waste into either bio-fertilizer or electric power and successful examples are taken up for widespread application.

Medical Waste

Observing that the number of private sector hospitals and clinics is increasing fast;

Noting that many of these hospitals and clinics are set up in residential parts of the cities;

Observing that the number of government, non-government, and private sector health care facilities is increasing fast in rural areas too;

Noting that most of these health care establishments do not have proper arrangement for disposal of their waste so that medical waste is fast becoming a major threat to environment and public health in Bangladesh;

Concerned that government support for non-government and private sector initiatives regarding hospital waste management has been lacking;

It is recommended that

1. No new permission be given for setting up health care establishments unless these furnish plans for proper disposal of their waste;
2. A system is put in place for safe and separate disposal of medical waste and it should be made mandatory for all hospitals and clinics become a part of the system by December 2004.
3. Particular care is given to hygienically disposal of radioactive and other hazardous medical waste.

4. In choosing from various ways of disposing medical waste, including incineration, pick the most environment-friendly, low-cost, and easy-to-monitor option. Make use of the international experience that is appropriate for Bangladesh.

5. Involve non-government and private sector establishments, as and where suitable, in proper disposal of medical waste.

Deforestation, Loss of Bio-diversity and Loss of Cultural diversity

Being concerned that the Sundarbans and forests of Bangladesh are disappearing fast reducing the forest coverage of the country to only nine percent while the recommended coverage is at least twenty-five percent;

Noting that reduction of the forest coverage is causing soil erosion, which in turn is contributing to the filling up of the surface water bodies;

Noting further that in the hilly parts of the country deforestation is often going hand in hand with cutting of hills, despite the ban on illegal cutting of hills;

Concerning on the allegation of corruption among officials is a major reason for continued deforestation and hill cutting despite laws intended to prevent these;

Being aware that Bangladesh has been rich in land and aquatic bio-diversity, and the deltaic environment of Bangladesh provided the habitat for many unique bio species; and knowing the many-faceted importance of bio-diversity, including its aesthetic value;

Alarmed that loss of forests is the leading cause of loss of bio-diversity in Bangladesh;

Noting that surface water pollution is causing the extinction of hundreds of fish species and is thus damaging seriously the aquatic diversity of the country;

Noting that indiscriminate use of hormones in the livestock sector may lead to serious consequences;

Observing that the life-style of many ethnic minorities depend crucially on preserving the forests and hills of the hilly parts of the country;

Recognizing that the necessity of fuel wood is contributing to the loss of trees and forests;

Recognizing the importance of involvement of local communities in protection and management of forests and surface water bodies and the bio-diversity contained in them;

Noting that deforestation and hill cutting is posing a serious threat to the life and culture of the hilly people of the country;

Observing that hilly people of Bangladesh represent the most important element of ethnic and cultural diversity in Bangladesh, and this diversity is now threatened by government-sponsored settlements;

It is recommended that

1. Preservation of the Sundarbans, the largest mangrove on the earth be conserved and protected.
2. Preservation of the existing forests is strictly ensured, and rehabilitation of denuded forest areas is taken up with involvement of local communities by giving them a stake in the initiative.
3. An action plan for rehabilitation is implemented for degraded mangroves forest.

4. Social forestry programs are intensified and local government institutions are entrusted with the task of implementation.
5. Effective steps are taken to root out the alleged corruption among forest officials.
6. Natural gas supply is extended to all parts of the country including rural areas in order to reduce the pressure on forests arising from the necessity of fuel wood.
7. The ban on the use of firewood for burning bricks is strictly enforced.
8. Substitute of firewood and wood for house building etc. is made available at affordable price.
9. Survey of floral and faunal bio-diversity of Bangladesh is expeditiously taken up.
10. Caution is exerted in use of hormones in the livestock sector.
11. Endangered species are identified and efforts made to protect them from further depletion. Extinct species are reintroduced following proper conservation practices.
12. The ban on hill cutting is strictly enforced and sincere efforts are made to preserve the special ecological features of the hilly parts of the country.
13. The ethnic and cultural diversity represented by the people of Bangladesh in various localities is valued respected, and intrusion into their land and life is stopped.

Protection of Natural Resources and Use of Renewable Energy

Noting that fertile land and abundant monsoon water are the two most important natural resources of Bangladesh;

Observing that though Bangladesh does not have many mineral resources, it has considerable amount of natural gas and coal;

Observing that in addition Bangladesh is blessed with abundant sunlight and wind power;

Concerned that Bangladesh is allowing its important natural resources to be degraded;

Observing that Bangladesh can reduce its dependence on fuel wood by making proper domestic use of its gas and coal reserves;

Noting that Bangladesh is not making use of its abundant renewable natural resources;

It is recommended that

1. Bangladesh preserves the fertility of its soil by adopting the open approach to its rivers, thus allowing the floodplains to benefit from regular monsoon overflow and siltation
2. Topsoil erosion is stopped through afforestation and other measures and by discouraging use of topsoil for brick making.
3. Dependence on chemical fertilizer and pesticides is reduced to preserve soil quality in the long run.
4. Best use is made of the monsoon flow to replenish the surface water bodies and underground aquifers.

5. Irrigation practices are improved to prevent waste of water during delivery and actual use by plants.
6. Bangladesh expands & diversify its commercial energy source base and encourage cleaner fuels including LPG for domestic use.
7. Bangladesh makes good use of its coal reserve through adoption of clean, environment-friendly coal technologies and thus diversify its energy base.
8. Bangladesh makes better use of various renewable-energy sources, including solar and wind power. Appropriate use is made of biogas. Time bound targets for adoption of different sustainable energy technology options are planned for fulfilling the obligation of universal electrification program by 2020.
9. A Renewable Energy Policy is formulated, and an agency is created with the explicit responsibility of promoting the use of renewable energy sources.
10. Energy conservation measures are encouraged in all energy consuming sectors of the economy.

Management of Urbanization

Realizing that some urbanization is inevitable as Bangladesh industrializes;

Observing that unplanned urbanization without basic urban amenities and institutions is creating a chaotic and unhealthy situation;

Noting that using the smallness of her size, Bangladesh can avoid excessive urban concentration by consciously spreading out economic activities across the country;

Observing that, through voluntary consolidation, Bangladesh can achieve a settlement pattern dominated by small townships that combine both agricultural and manufacturing activities;

Noting that these townships can have an agreed plan and be equipped with necessary urban amenities and be connected with the rest of the country through modern infrastructure.

It is recommended that

1. Proper implementation of development plans for cities and towns is ensured and they are regularly reviewed and updated; and environmentally sustainable plans are prepared for other urban areas for such plans have not yet been prepared.
2. Effective coordination is secured among institutions involved in urban management.
3. Proper participation of stakeholders is ensured in urban management.
4. Settlement planning in urban areas takes into consideration physical, topographical and environmental issues in controlling land use density.
5. Efficient transport service, dependable garbage disposal system, adequate sewage disposal and sanitation arrangements and use of environment friendly technology in economic activities are promoted.
6. A user-friendly information system for management of the environment is instituted.

Management of Dhaka City and Other Urban Centers

Concerned that Dhaka city is growing too fast without attention to the environment and to the facilities of urban amenities to its residents;

Alarmed that the utility infrastructure of Dhaka city is under serious stress and on the verge of breakdown in certain respects;

Recognizing that about a third of Dhaka city population lives in slums;

Observing that the traffic congestion already brings Dhaka city to a standstill in many of its parts and at many different times of the day;

Noting that huge areas of parks, open spaces, and water bodies of Dhaka city have all but disappeared, creating a suffocating environment;

Observing that all canals that once connected Dhaka city with adjoining rivers have been filled up, and through implementation of different embankment projects Dhaka city is now planned to be completely sealed off from surrounding rivers;

Noting that cordoning Dhaka city off from adjoining rivers will create serious problem of drainage and water logging and will create a very unhygienic environment;

Noting further that cordoning Dhaka city off from rivers will encourage below flood-level housing construction, and this will aggravate the flood threat by converting Dhaka city into like the DND project area, perennially threatened by flood overflow;

Observing that the wetlands surrounding Dhaka city, thought to serve as floodwater holding areas, are being filled up for housing construction;

Noting that Dhaka city can both maintain a clean, hygienic, and pleasant environment and reduce the threat of flood overflow by maintaining close links with adjoining rivers, as the city of Amsterdam has done;

Observing that the Master Plan for development of Dhaka city is flouted;

Aware that land use-zoning laws are not observed;

Being aware that a large part of Bangladesh is vulnerable to earthquakes;

Noting a serious lack of coordination characterizes the work of various utility providing agencies (which in turn belong to different ministries) and the operations of the Dhaka city corporation's office;

Recognizing that the problems currently faced by Dhaka city are what await other big urban centers of the country;

Alarmed those other big cities of the country, such as Chittagong, are also getting afflicted by problems similar to those of Dhaka city, and unless the course is corrected, these problems are certain to attain full-blown proportions in time;

It is recommended that

1. The Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP) is implemented, properly reviewed, and regularly updated.
2. Institutional arrangements are made for better coordination among utility agencies belonging to different ministries and City Corporation/Municipalities.
3. Zoning recommended in DMDP and Bangladesh National Building Code is enforced.

4. The remaining parks, ponds, and open spaces of the city are preserved and the lost ones are restored.
5. The capacity for provision of utilities is expanded to keep pace with the growing necessity.
6. Permission for construction of high-rise buildings be given only after careful assessment of the ensuing burden on utility supply and of the impact on the neighborhood environment.
7. Industrial enterprises within the city are made to observe environmental regulations strictly.
8. Efforts to cordon off Dhaka city from adjoining rivers is abandoned; instead old canals wherever possible are restored, existing canals are properly maintained and Dhaka city is connected extensively with surrounding rivers.
9. Embankments, if necessary, are constructed only to regulate the timing and extent of river overflow, not to cordon off the city from the rivers.
10. Emphasis is given on developing an efficient mass transit system, instead of encouraging use of private cars.
11. The traffic rules are strictly enforced, sidewalks are kept unobstructed, old and defective vehicles are banned from the streets.
12. Appropriate sensitivity is shown to the needs of people and drivers in banning slow moving vehicles (such as rickshaws) from various streets.
13. Slum dwelling is discouraged through creation of employment and income earning opportunities in rural areas and small townships all across the country, and not through sudden forceful evictions.
14. In approving building and construction plans, attention is paid to their potential resistance to earthquakes. Arrangements are made for proper monitoring of earthquake danger and of cautioning in the event such dangers become imminent;
15. Other large cities learn from the experience of Dhaka city and avoid getting into similar problems.

Marine and Coastal Environment

Recognizing that Bangladesh has a long coastline, which holds both considerable promise and some danger;

Noting that the country can benefit much from efficient use of the marine resources of the Bay of Bengal;

Observing that the marine and coastal environment is currently under threat from several directions, including ship-breaking industry, shrimp cultivation, unplanned construction, along beaches and sea shores; oil spillage from ocean bound vessels;

Noting that the marine resources are currently exploited in an unplanned manner;

It is recommended that

1. Appropriate guidelines are set up and followed in using the marine fisheries available in the Bay of Bengal.

3. Construction along shorelines is strictly regulated in order to preserve the appeal of Bangladesh's beaches.
4. The ship breaking industry is regulated and oil spillage is stopped in order to prevent it from impacting the coastal environment negatively.
5. More research is conducted on the potential of Bangladesh's coastline and her maritime zone

Legal and Management Aspects

Noting that legal and institutional framework for management of environment remains weak;

Realizing that pollution control can be achieved through administrative orders as well as by providing economic incentives;

Noting that public vigilance is very effective in ensuring compliance of environmental regulations.

It is recommended that

1. The legal and regulatory framework for protection of environment is streamlined and strengthened by removing overlaps and ambiguities.
2. An optimal mix of administrative orders and market-based instruments is arrived in controlling pollution, remembering that the mix may be different for different types of pollution. Input from economists', lawyers', and other relevant professional organizations be sought in deciding about the policy mixes
3. Public participation, through their representative organizations, is sought to act as a watchdog in ensuring compliance of the environmental laws and regulations.

IV. ACTION AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

Being aware that the entire responsibility for protecting Bangladesh environment is not of the Government alone and there are many things that people can do at their community level;

Recognizing the complementarity of pro-environmental efforts at the community level and those at the national level;

It is recommended that

1. All social, cultural, and civic organizations in a neighborhood come together to discuss the environmental problems of the locality.
2. Each neighborhood community takes up programs to manage and improve their own environment as far as practicable, without looking for any assistance of the government or the municipality.
3. Neighborhood communities explain the connections between environmental problems of the neighborhood and national policies and urge the people of the neighborhood to join forces with the national environmental movement in order to influence governmental policies in the right direction.

V. ACTION AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

Noting that caring for the environment should begin at the individual sphere, and that a lot can be done to improve the environment through efforts at the individual level;

Recognizing the complementarity among pro-environmental efforts at individual, community, and national levels;

It is recommended that

1. Every citizen sets example of ensuring good environment in one's own home and immediate surroundings; and teaches the value of good environment to children, relatives, and friends; and refrains from environmentally harmful act.
2. Every citizen sees the connection among environmental problems at the individual, community, and national levels, and comes forward to participate in pro-environmental efforts at larger levels.

VI. ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF BAPA

Recognizing that ICBEN-2000 led to the formation of BAPA as a common platform of pro-environmental forces of Bangladesh;

Noting that through its public campaigns BAPA has been very successful in drawing national attention to environmental issues;

Noting further that efforts of BAPA had an important role behind the recent positive developments with regard to environmental protection in Bangladesh;

Noting that environment movement needs to be expanded to all parts of the country, including Zilas (districts) and Upazilas (sub-districts), and noting that some efforts have already been made in this regard;

Noting that a distinctive feature of ICBEN-2002 is significant participation of pro-environmental activities from various districts and Upazilas of Bangladesh;

It is recommended that

1. BAPA considers ICBEN-2002 as the beginning of the next phase of development of the environment movement in Bangladesh.
2. BAPA sees the main task of this next phase in expansion of the environmental movement in districts and *Upazilas* of the country.
3. In addition to expansion to *Zilas* and *Upazilas*, BAPA makes a concerted effort to expand among students and youth. The precise organizational form of such expansion is decided in the light of the experience and in consultation with various student and youth organizations that are already active in pro-environmental efforts.
4. BAPA formulates the organizational form of this expansion in the light of experience, with adequate input from environmental activists in *Zilas* and *Upazilas*, and proceeds gradually.

5. BAPA works out concrete action plan to activate program committees and helps to implement their programs.

6. BAPA pays similar attention to expansion among other sections of the society.