Sustainable development is an essential prerequisite for peace

The search for peace is eternal; but it remains elusive since the dawn of civilization. The concern for peace, leading to organized peace movement, had its origin in the 19th century and found its strength in the aftermath of the World War I and gained renewed momentum after the ending of World War II. However, there is no peace theory as such that would instantly guide policymakers or practitioners in the pursuit of peace.

Human history is replete with conflicts and wars. These have devastated societies, nations and States. Peace is generally defined positively and negatively, based on the elements that form its structure. *Negative peace* is viewed as absence of physical violence, conflict or war. *Positive peace* is projected as active cooperation or promotion of friendship, understanding, guaranteeing social justice, contributing to development and integration.

Today the world economy is divided into the camps of *fortunate few* and *deprived many*. The world *Polity* is divided into the *powerful few* and *dominated many*. As a result equity, equality and good sense based on humanistic ideas have given rise to brutal force, unethical divide and parochial resolve. Inequality has become the defining issue of our time - the top eight billionaires of the world possess the same wealth as the bottom half of whole of humanity - with each billionaire being worth the same as 462 million common people.

While millions die of hunger, lack of nutrition or non-availability of simple medicine, few people live a wasteful life. Such living is considered by many as the height of good living. Modern-day luxury and consumerism is promoted by technology and market-led production system and propelled by heightened commercial domination. The deprivation of many by the tyrannical dominance of few has led the world to search for a world where most of the humankind will be entitled to a life free from hunger, fear, want, inequality and injustice. Therefore the appeal for peace becomes universal.

Absence of war is not peace
Peace does not mean merely an absence of war. The factors which constitute threat to peace arise out of political, social and economic situations   It is necessary that we take into account all those elements in society that can pose a threat to peace. In our present times, we are confronted with formidable challenges that have potential to destabilize the societies.

Peace dividend
The suffering humanity aspired for peace at the end of WWll, but that didn't happen. At the end of cold war in 1990, which led to the breakdown of USSR into 13 independent States, could not bring peace to the world. The *peace-dividend* which was expected out the demise of the bi-polar world could not be achieved by the world community as yet.

An Agenda for Peace
At the first-ever Summit Meeting of the Security Council the then Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his famous report - An Agenda for Peace - (1992) put forward four types of peace efforts by the UN system to bring about peace in the world. These were: *preventative diplomacy, peace-making, peacekeeping and peace-building*. At a point of Bangladesh became a member of the Peace-building Commission.

An Agenda for Development

How does one define Development and what are the parameters? Development for whom and what are the costs of development? The answers to these questions lie in the nature of development itself. Is it for arms buildup? Is it for nuclear weapons? Take the case of USSR. What happened there before it broke into 13 pieces in 1990? What were the expenses of world military then and what is the cost now?

MDGs to SDGs

Millennium Development Goals were the outcome of the Millennium Declaration which was adopted in 2000 where our current Prime Minister was present. With the time frame of 2015, MDGs had eight goals, 18 targets and 48 indicators. Bangladesh fared well in achieving five out of eight goals: halved hunger and poverty, reduced mothers' mortality and U5 child mortality, enrolled children in the schools and increased life expectancy.

The Sustainable Development Goals set for 2030 have 17 goals and 169 indicators. Goal 16 emphasizes to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development – a society where no one will be left behind.

Peace and Sustainable Development

In 1986 the UN adopted the Declaration of Right to Development. The expression *sustainable development* was first used in the World Conservation Strategy (1980). The 1982 Convention of the Law of the Sea gave legal frame. The 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development endorsed the concept Sustainable Development.

The concept of sustainable human development is anchored upon three pillars; *economic, social including governance and Environmental*. Economic growth is essential for poverty alleviation and enhancement of material wellbeing, social progress necessarily involves alleviation of conditions of the poor and the disadvantaged and sustained progress on the basis of inclusions, empowerment and participation within an equitable framework. The governance should be democratic, inclusive, transparent and accountable. On the environmental front, the ongoing process of degradation needs to be reversed through appropriate management of natural resources, leading to protection and enhancement of biodiversity, improvement of the resilience of natural systems, and reduction of pollution.

In order to promote sustainable human development and peace as a consequence, it is necessary to improve human capability (in terms of education, training, health, access to governance and resources) and expand human chaise and opportunity for the poor and the deprived. Thus, enabled, they will be able to participate purposefully in economic process and also in social, political and environmental process, contribute effectively thereto, and benefit duly therefrom. As a result, social equity will improve and peace will find a worthy ally.

Bangladesh and Peace efforts

Bangladesh fought the 1971 war of liberation to achieve right to vote, right to food, right to education and right to enjoy the fruits of democracy and independence. In his speech at the UN General Assembly in Bangla on 24 September 1974, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared, "Peace is an imperative for survival of mankind. It represents the deepest aspirations of men and women throughout the world. Peace to endure must, however be based on justice."

The historic Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord signed by Prime Minister Sk. Hasina in 1997 brought about an end to a 26-year conflict in the region. The CHT Accord gave Bangladesh peace after decades of a low-level insurgency costing the country over Tk 300 crores per annum; and

thousand of casualties. Prime Minister Sk Hasina was awarded the UNESCO Peace Prize for the Accord by Dr Henry Kissinger himself, who was the chair of the Award Committee and offered an apology for what he did in 1971.

Contribution of press to CHT Accord
Adequate flow of information through media plants the seeds of change. In 1997 Government of Sk Hasina signed an accord known as Santichukti. Here the role of media was great. At that time news items of two national daily newspapers on CHT were surveyed: The Ittefaq and The Daily Star. From 22 Nov. 1997 to 12 December 1998, Ittefaq published 1642 news items, 34 editorials, 373 post editorials and 160 pictures and published many letters to the editors. Daily Star published 675 news items, 28 editorials, 477 post-editorials and 40 pictures.

Threats to peace
The threats of peace are under the umbrella of some intolerances: ethno-national conflicts, discrimination against minorities xenophobia, in respect of refuges and migrants, racial violence, religious extremism, persecution of intellectuals and other professionals professing freedom of speech, intolerance on the part of the political leaders and ideologies, unemployment and poor health care; exclusion of marginalized groups, (women, children, aged and disabled) or discrimination against them.

How a nation becomes peaceful where corruption eats up 2 percent of GDP, children are abused, women and girls are harassed, raped and murdered; air, dust and sound pollution haunts the city dwellers and motorized vehicles run at a speed of only 3.5 miles an hour in the capital city? What about the dignity and human rights of the ill-fated, tortured and raped Rohingya refugees?

Role of NGOs
 Peace as a notion has undergone major transformation in qualitative terms since its envisioning by the early philosophers and political thinkers. It has moved away from the level of abstraction and offers concrete meaning in structural terms and as a process. It requires States and non-State entities i.e. NGOs, CSOs and other actors in the society.

NGOs are the links between Government and the people. They work as the early warning system for any crises that emerge in the national horizon. They can supplement and compliment the government efforts. The structure of the NGOs is based on democracy, secularism, human rights, development and women empowerment. The flexibility, human approach, operational mobility makes NGOs more effective and acceptable to the people.

Poverty is inimical to peace. Government machineries generally do not reach the poorest of the poor. Deprivations and seclusion of common people generally give rise to tension among them beyond the sight of the ruling elites. NGOs work there as missing links between the government and the people.

In 1994 UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali noted that Non-governmental organizations are now considered full participants in international life and that NGOs are an essential part of the legitimacy without which no international activity can be meaningful.

Since peace does not mean merely an absence of war, it is necessary that we take into account all those elements in society that can pose a threat to peace. In our present times, we are confronted with formidable challenges that have potential to destabilize society- poverty, environmental degradation, racial intolerance, drug abuse and HIV/AIDs and terrorism.

Role of Dhaka Ahsnia Mission in SDGs

With the motto of Divine and Humanitarian Services, DAM has completed its 60-year journey in January 2018. During these six decades it has achieved a good number of national (including Independence Award) and international awards for its human development activities. With its more than 26 institutions (including the first private technological university, vocational training centres, teachers' training college) and 70 projects, DAM is working in the fields of anti-smoking, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, street children, beggars rehabilitation, environmental protection, prisoners, slum dwellers. The Community Learning Centers (CLCs) are imparting multi-grade teaching-learning education to millions of drop-out and underprivileged children of the remote areas. The Children City in Panchagar – an innovative approach in the world – houses around 300 street children and offer them free education, housing, health care and vocational training. The recent initiative launched in Cox's Bazzar for the Rohingya refugees include relief, education, water and hygiene facilities. DAM's efforts are directed so that the goal of inclusive society is achieved where nobody will remain outside the orbit of development, dignity and human rights.

UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor's statement still remains valid. He said, we must realize that each and every human being is more precious than the world's monuments, that all children are our children, that children have no nationality, that we can no longer allow them to suffer the ordeals of war, to be victims of the terrible unacknowledged wars that cause thousands of them to die daily for lack of medicines available elsewhere, to be left to live on the streets inhaling substances that damage their brains irreparably.

We must provide our children and people with a different vision of history. We should disarm history; there are too many battles, too much power, too many generals and soldiers. We sometimes forget all those people whose creative capacity became a turning point for their countries - the writers, artists and philosophies.

Martin Luther King still inspires us because of his dream of civil peace through equality and justice. Alfred Nobel still lives among us because his enduring testament was the expression and enactment of a dream of fraternity among nations and among generations past, present and future.

And finally, since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defiance of peace must be constructed.

<center>** *** **</center>

Kazi Ali Reza
Director, Communications and PRD
Dhaka Ahsania Mission

26 April 2018

file: desktop-peace-sdg-4th final