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MPs join hands in climate battle

Parliamentarians from 19 countries form network to help victims
Staff Correspondent

Parliamentarians of home and abroad launched a unique network to engage parliaments and their members across the globe in advocating policies that would help climate victim nations effectively address global warming challenges.

The declaration came yesterday at the closing ceremony of the three-day 'International Meeting of Parliamentarians on Climate Change: Beyond COP 17' at Hotel Radisson in the capital.

The new platform titled "Parliamentarians for Climate Justice" would promote strategic alliances of parliaments and parliamentarians, working through cross-party groups and parliamentary networks and sharing knowledge, information and best practices.

"The network will focus its resources on people most vulnerable to climate change--wherever in the world they may be," said Saber Hossain Chowdhury, MP, chairperson of All Party Parliamentary Group on Climate Change, reading out the declaration.

Bangladesh's Parliamentary Standing Committee on Environment and Forest organised the three-day event with support from UNDP.

Parliamentarians from Bangladesh, Canada, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, the East African Legislative Assembly, Indonesia, the Maldives, Mali, the Netherlands, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Samoa, Scotland, Senegal, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda attended the meeting.

According to the "Dhaka Parliamentary Declaration" all MPs endorsing the declaration can join the network whose action plan and statement of principles would be elaborated by the steering committee by the end of April this year.

The network's immediate actions would include forming a steering committee to decide policy priorities and seek funding to organise gatherings and employ a small secretariat, Saber said.

The parliamentarians at the meeting committed to collaborate across party-political boundaries to work for the welfare of those most affected by climate change and establish parliamentary committees to monitor and oversee climate-related policies.

The members of the parliament would work to enhance their capacity, develop integrated local, national and regional frameworks for climate change adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk reduction, prioritise funding for energy efficiency projects and renewable energy, says the declaration.

They would foster dialogue with the civil society, constituents, NGOs, businesses and involve people in the policy-making process, Saber said.

The members also committed to abolish fossil fuel subsidies in a gradual manner that does not hurt the poorest and ensure availability of alternatives.

Besides, they would review government budgets, expenditures and legislation regarding climate change, monitor disbursement of international climate finance to ensure transparency.

Addressing as chief guest, Jatiya Sangsad's Speaker Abdul Hamid said, "We need to make sure that the poor and vulnerable in our countries, often removed from international negotiations, can trust us to represent them."

Stating that climate change causes poverty, affects human security and has a negative impact on global economy, he said, "We parliamentarians have an important role to play. We have to ensure that there is a policy shift. We have to rise to the challenge and act united."

UNDP Resident Representative Robert Juhkam called upon the MPs to rise above traditional politics.

"As you all acknowledge, it is a humanitarian issue and a development concern. I therefore call on all parliamentarians to seek out common interests, forge alliances that work across parties and use cross-party caucuses to educate and empower MPs to operate more effectively," he said.

Jatiya Sangsad Chief Whip Abdus Shahid and Abdul Momin Talukder, chief of the parliamentary standing committee on environment and forest ministry, also spoke.



(From left) Abdus Shahid, Chief Whip of Jatiya Sangsad; Abdul Hamid, Speaker of Jatiya Sangsad; Abdul Momin Talukder, chief of the parliamentary standing committee on environment and forest ministry; Golam Shabur and Robert Juhkam, UNDP resident representative; at the closing ceremony of the three-day 'International Meeting of Parliamentarians on Climate Change: Beyond COP 17' at Hotel Radisson in the city yesterday. Photo: STAR