

BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN BANGLADESH AND NIGERIA

A. Political:

1. Bangladesh and Nigeria established diplomatic relations in the mid 70s. Bilateral relations have been growing steadily since then. Nigeria accorded recognition to Bangladesh on 27 February 1974. The relationship has not assumed economic significance as bilateral trade and economic engagements are not significant.

2. Bangladesh opened its resident diplomatic Mission in Abuja in 1977 but it was closed after a while in the same year. Nigeria also opened its resident Mission in Dhaka in 2000 but shortly it was closed down. Currently, Nigerian High Commission in New Delhi, India is concurrently accredited to Bangladesh. Bangladesh High Commission in Morocco was concurrently accredited to Nigeria for a while but later Bangladesh High Commission in Nairobi, Kenya was concurrently accredited to Nigeria till opening of the Mission in Abuja. Bangladesh re-opened its High Commission in Nigeria on 26 November 2016. Bangladesh proposed the Nigerian authorities on different occasions to re-open their Mission in Bangladesh.

3. The role of Nigeria in peace-keeping in the region is significant, while Bangladesh also enjoys high reputation for being one of the largest contributors under the UN Peacekeeping Missions and operations worldwide including in Africa.

4. Both Bangladesh and Nigeria share similar views and take identical positions as common members of the UN, NAM, OIC, the Commonwealth and the D-8 Group. Nigeria voted in favour of the Resolution on Myanmar at the UN General Assembly in 2018 and 2019.

B. Visits :

1. From Bangladesh to Nigeria :

(a) Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited Abuja, Nigeria in October 2010 to attend the D-8 Summit.

(b) A 5-member delegation led by H.E. Mr. Amir Hossain Amu, M.P., Hon'ble Minister, M/o Industries of the Government of Bangladesh visited Nigeria from 13-17 November 2017 to attend 6th D-8 Ministerial Meeting on Industry.

(c) Hon'ble Foreign Minister H.E. Dr. Dipu Moni, MP visited Nigeria from 6-9 July 2010 to attend the Ministerial Conference of the 7th D-8 Summit held in Abuja on 6 July 2010.

(d) H.E. Mr. Abdullah Al Islam Jakob, Hon'ble Deputy Minister for Environment and Forest of the Government of Bangladesh made a stopover in Lagos, Nigeria from 10-12 October 2016 on way to his official visit to Kigali, Rwanda.

(e) Chief of Army Staff General Abu Belal Muhammad Shafiul Huq, SBP, ndc, psc, of Bangladesh paid an official visit to Nigeria from 21 April 2017 to 26 April 2017 and led a 5-member delegation at the invitation of his Nigerian counterpart.

(f) A 3-member delegation from Bangladesh Armed Forces Division (AFD) led by Brig. Gen. Mohammed Mahabubul Hoque, PBGM, ndc, afwc, psc, visited Nigeria from 15-21 October 2017 to participate at the International Seminar on Managing Asymmetric Security Challenges in the 21st Century.

(g) A 6-member delegation from Bangladesh Armed Forces led by Major General Walker Uz Zaman, ndc, visited Nigeria from 12-19 November 2017 to participate a seminar on Counter Insurgency / Counter Terrorism in Nigeria.

(h) Ms. Sanchita Haque, Counsellor of Bangladesh at the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to UN, New York attended a seminar on Promoting International Cooperation in Combating Illicit Financial Flows (KFFs) and Enhancing Assets Recovery in order to Foster Sustainable Development held in Abuja, Nigeria on 5-7 June 2017.

(i) A 9-member delegation led by Ms. Shahana Zaman, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Bangladesh participated at the 11th International Arts and Crafts (INAC) Expo organized by the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) of Nigeria (17-24 November, 2018).

(j) A 9-member delegation led by Mr. Md. Naoshad Hossain, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Bangladesh participated at the 12th International Arts and Crafts (INAC) Expo organized by the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) of Nigeria (20-24 November, 2019).

(k) A 20-member delegation led by Mr. Md. Ataur Rahman, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Bangladesh visited Nigeria in connection with the 2019 Abuja Carnival organized by the Federal Ministry of Information & Culture of Nigeria (23-25 November, 2019).

(l) A 19-member team comprising representatives from M/o Cultural Affairs and M/o Foreign Affairs led by Mr. Fahimul Islam, Joint Secretary participated for the first time at the “**Carnival Calabar**” (27-29 December, 2019) known as the “Africa’s Biggest Street Party” and showcased cultural beauty of Bangladesh.

2. From Nigeria to Bangladesh :

(a) Nigerian Minister for Commerce H.E. Engr. Mustafa Bello visited Bangladesh in 2002.

(b) A 10-member delegation led by H.E. Prof. Anthony Gozie Anwukah, Honorable State Minister of the Federal Ministry of Education of Nigeria visited Bangladesh to attend E-9 Ministerial review meeting on Education 2030 held in Dhaka from 5-7 February 2017.

(c) A 8-member joint delegation comprising high Officials of the Nigerian National Commission for Refugees, Migrants & Internally Displaced Persons and the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs visited Bangladesh to participate at the 9th GFMD Summit Meeting held in Dhaka, Bangladesh from 10-12 December 2016.

(d) A Nigerian parliamentary delegation participated at the 63rd Conference of CPA held in Dhaka from 01-08 November 2017.

(e) A 5-member delegation from Nigeria led by H.E. Mr. Isa Muhammadu Dodo, Ambassador, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Riyadh,

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia attended the 45th Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) held in Dhaka from 5-6 May 2018.

Visits at the private sector level :

The Director of the WALTON Group of Company Mr. S.M. Mahbulul Alam visited Nigeria from 28 October to 10 November 2016 in connection to survey the Nigerian market to explore and expand business and to attend Lagos International Trade Fair 2016 held at Lagos, Nigeria from 04-06 November 2016.

C. Bilateral Agreements/MoUs :

The following proposed Agreements/MoUs have been pending between the two countries:

1. A Protocol on Bilateral Consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Nigeria and Bangladesh is likely to be signed soon as both sides cleared the draft proposed by Bangladesh.
2. A Draft Memorandum of Understanding on Agricultural Cooperation between Bangladesh and Nigeria which was proposed by Bangladesh side is now lying with the Nigerian side on receipt of inputs from Bangladesh side.
3. Agreement on Educational Cooperation between Bangladesh and Nigeria which was proposed by Nigeria is now pending with Nigerian side on receipt of inputs from Nigerian side. It may be mentioned here that currently few hundred Nigerian students are studying in Bangladesh including at the OIC-run Islamic University of Technology(IUT), Gazipur, Dhaka.
4. A Draft Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation in the field of Defence between Bangladesh and Nigeria which was proposed by Nigeria and is lying with the Bangladesh side.
5. Agreement between the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the Elimination of Double Taxation with respect to Taxes on Income and the

Prevention of Tax Evasion and Avoidance was proposed by Bangladesh and lying with the Nigerian side.

5. A draft Cultural Cooperation Agreement between Bangladesh and Nigeria is now lying with the Nigerian side which was proposed by Bangladesh.

D. Trade and Economic cooperation:

There exists huge potentials for enhancement of trade and economic cooperation between the two countries which needs to be fully exploited. Jute products, pharmaceutical, ceramics, iron chin, tobacco, articles of paper pulp, paper yarn, articles of human hair and cotton bags are the mainstay of Bangladesh's export basket. The Nigerian importers may import various products and services from Bangladesh including pharmaceuticals, jute bags, ready-made garments, textiles ceramic products, light engineering, frozen fish, food items, leather, natural fibres, knit wears, footwear etc. which have great prospects in the Nigerian market. The volume of Nigerian imports from Bangladesh is insignificant but could be increased manifold. Nigeria could also export more to Bangladesh (oil, cotton, cashewnuts etc. are potentials items). Bilateral trade volume between Bangladesh and Nigeria for the last 09 (nine) years are as under which is in favour of Nigeria :

Bangladesh – Nigeria Balance of Trade

Value in Million US\$

FY	Export	Import	Balance
2010-11	14.12	21.90	-7.78
2011-12	4.23	13.20	-8.97
2012-13	6.53	6.70	-0.17
2013-14	3.36	4.90	-1.54
2014-15	2.43	3.70	-1.27
2015-16	4.09	3.30	0.79
2016-17	3.50	4.40	-0.90
2017-18	5.13	9.10	-3.97
2018-19	5.47	5.80	- 0.33

Source:Export

Promotion

Bureau(EPB), Dhaka

E. Defence Cooperation :

Nigerian military officers have been attending senior professional courses in the Defence Services Command and Staff College, National Defence College and other Defence Training Institutions in Bangladesh in big numbers and performing well over the past years. In one estimate 289 Nigerian Defence Officers were trained in Bangladesh which makes it a visible activity in bilateral relations. On the other hand, number of Bangladeshi participants attending Courses in Nigeria is insignificant. One senior Defence Officer (at the level of Brigadier General) has been attending the NDC, Nigeria each year.

Potentials, Prospects and Plan of Action

Pursuing economic contents of diplomacy has been one of the focused areas of the High Commission as there are huge potentials of enhancing commercial links between the two countries. It has been participating almost all trade fairs to showcase Bangladesh's export potentials. Nigeria is an important country in Africa which plays a vital role in the African Union and ECOWAS and possesses huge economic and business potentials. Nigeria is the largest economy of Africa and 6th largest producer of oil in the world. It is a huge market of 200 million people and the country imports most of her requirements from abroad. However, the potentials of our relations and prospects of Nigerian markets are not exploited as yet. There has also been increased demand of business visas in recent months (around 300 visas in each month and most of them are for business purposes until the outbreak of Covid-19) which indicates the growing interest about Bangladeshi products among the Nigerian business community. Exchange of high level visits including trade delegation is important to inject dynamism in bilateral relations.

Nigerians are keen to see that Bangladesh helps them establish textile/RMG, pharmaceuticals/jute and ceramics factories in Nigeria as a joint venture utilizing the wide expertise Bangladesh has in this regard. Bangladesh can benefit by joint ventures particularly in the fields of textiles/RMG as Nigeria being a member of AGOA has duty and quota free access to US market while Bangladesh can't avail this facility as a LDC. It is important to note that Nigeria is trying to reduce its dependence on oil and diversify its sources of revenues which paves the ways for foreign investments.

Challenges and Opportunities:

Investing in Nigeria or forging strong commercial links can bring huge profits for Bangladeshi investors/exporters and they should overcome the mind-set about Africa which largely remains unexplored. Security remains a major challenge and malaria is also a major health hazard. But it is also a fact that many foreign countries including a good number of Asian countries have developed mutually beneficial & strong (commercial) relationship with Nigeria. Moreover, Nigerians are extremely warm, friendly and well-mannered.