

Belal, Sheikh Mohammed (Bangladesh)

[Original: English]

Statement of qualifications

This is a statement submitted in accordance with paragraph 6 of the resolution of the Assembly of States Parties relating to the procedure for the nomination and election of members of the Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for Victims for the benefit of Victims (ICC-ASP/1/Res.7), adopted on 9 September 2002.

Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed Belal meets the criteria established in paragraph 1 of the above-mentioned resolution; “the candidates [shall] be of high moral character, impartiality, integrity and have competence in the assistance to victims of serious crimes.”

Ambassador Belal was elected in December 2018 as one of the five members of the Board for Trust Fund for Victims representing the Asia-Pacific region. During his first term, Ambassador Belal worked on many issues including, but not limited to, as Board’s focal points on issues relating to ongoing review mechanism. This exercise, it is hoped, will bring much needed focus on the issues of victims and the restoration of their dignity and safety for all the victims globally, including for those who are in the Asia-Pacific region. These exercises surely have helped Ambassador Belal to deepen his knowledge and understanding of the Rome Statute framework and its implementation globally.

Ambassador Belal has been dealing with the humanitarian legal issues for a significant part of his career and has had significant experiences with the Fund’s implementation of victims’ reparations. To complement more, Ambassador Belal has also been a manager of a fund involving members from all parts of the globe and thereby equipped to complement Funds role to raise awareness both in the public and private sector for raising funds. With significant experience in both diplomatic and financial spheres, Ambassador Belal is expected to contribute more during his second term.

Following obtaining his master’s in public administration from Harvard University of USA in 2012, Mr. Belal devoted his career towards furthering Bangladesh's advocacy for diplomacy, disarmament and justice for the victims. His quest for working for peace and justice took a boost when he was appointed as Bangladesh Ambassador to the Netherlands with residence in The Hague - the city of peace and justice in April 2014.

In his role as Bangladesh Ambassador to the Netherlands, Ambassador Belal has had the opportunity to work as Bangladesh Permanent Representative to the International Criminal Court (ICC), Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), Common Fund for Commodity (CFC) etc.

In December 2020, Ambassador Belal was elected as Managing Director of the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) from a panel of six candidates. CFC is an international financial organization dedicated to the mission of poverty alleviation globally. Upon his assumption as Managing Director of the CFC, Ambassador Belal sought approval from the Executive Board to continue his pro bono duties as member of Trust Fund for Victims (TFV) and was approved forthwith.

Ambassador Belal represented Bangladesh during his nation's historic achievement of peaceful settlement of maritime disputes with India at the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) and led the process that resulted in gaining access to a maritime territory that has changed Bangladesh's maritime history forever. Ever since, Ambassador Belal has involved himself in a series of speaking engagements highlighting the importance of peaceful settlement of disputes and importance of diplomacy.

During his tenure as Bangladesh Ambassador to the Netherlands, Ambassador Belal was elected as Chairperson of the Executive Council of the OPCW for the 2017-2018 term. Mr. Belal was the first-ever Chairperson from Bangladesh in the twenty years' plus history of the OCPW. Although his tenure as the Chair of the Executive Council, an apex organ of OPCW comprising 41 of the OPCW's 193 member States, was hugely challenging because of civil war in Syria and repeated alleged uses of chemical weapons in several countries, Mr. Belal conducted his business with utmost professionalism and sincerity.

Ambassador Belal oversaw the process of appointment of the incumbent Director-General of the OPCW, which happens only after eight years, to the satisfaction of all. His innovative, calm and candid approach helped conclude this rather arduous job in the shortest possible time. The hallmark of Mr. Belal's tenure as Chairperson of the Executive Council was his ability to engage almost all 193 State Parties in the affairs of the OPCW despite his mandate to work as Chair of the 41-member Executive Council.

Always on the look-out for innovations and creativity, Mr. Belal remained engaged with all key stakeholders in dialogue and negotiations to pursue consensus culture of the organization. In addition to his role as Chair of the Executive Council, Mr. Belal also worked in a host of other capacities like Chairperson of Credential Committee for the Conference of State Parties (CSP), Vice Chairperson for the CSP of OPCW as well as Vice-Chairperson of the Governing Council of the CFC.

In his engagements with the Court, Mr. Belal has been a constant voice and activist for the cause of victims. Perhaps this was the reason why the Bureau appointed him as "Facilitator for the Trust Fund of Victims" for the term 2015-2016. Ambassador Belal was also a member, of panels of Ambassadors, appointed by the President of the Assembly of States Parties for nomination of Head of Independent Oversight Mechanism at the Court in the recent past.

While working with the Trust Fund for Victims, Mr. Belal had been a constant promoter of innovative outreach for fund raising and has since been pursuing TFV bring much needed dynamism for fund rising in both public and private spheres. Mr. Belal is a believer in sincere outreach no matter how odd it may initially seem. Given his years of experiences in Washington DC, as Deputy Ambassador of the Bangladesh Embassy in the United States of America, Mr. Belal is not only conversant with the fund-raising culture in the United States, but also remained in contact with a good number of fund raising experts there. It is expected that Mr. Belal will be hugely helpful in complementing the Trust Fund for Victims' fund raising drive in the future.

Mr. Belal's conviction in the wellbeing of victims is more than personal. Given his upbringing, in the early years of Bangladesh's independence, after a bloody war and genocide, Ambassador Belal took upon himself the cause of coming to the aid of victims. It is because of this belief and spirit of making a difference, Mr. Belal has represented Bangladesh to all the sessions of the Assembly of State Parties to the Rome Statute from 2015 to 2020. He has been a voice for geographical and gender balance in the Court and beyond. It was during his tenure that Bangladesh was elected during the eighteenth session of the Assembly, in 2017, as a member of the Bureau, for the first time ever.

Before coming to The Hague, Mr. Belal worked as Director General in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh with jurisdiction over East Asia and the Pacific. During his tenure as Director General, Mr. Belal was instrumental in spearheading Bangladesh's relations with a good number of countries like Australia, New Zealand, People's Republic of China, Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of Korea, Japan, and a number of Pacific Island countries. At the same time, Mr. Belal also acted as focal point for the government of Bangladesh for a number of international and regional organizations. During this time, Mr. Belal also led his country's delegation in a number of international and regional organizations.

Mr. Belal, despite overwhelming engagements with his present job, continues his voluntary portfolio as President of Alumni Association of Institute of Forestry and Environmental Sciences (IFESCU), Chittagong University in his home country. Given his leadership and known fund raising prowess, Ambassador Belal has been working hard to establish the first-ever career development center for students of his Institute and making sure that incoming students will be much better endowed to take up the challenges of a climatically vulnerable country like Bangladesh.

In his pro bono role as Director of "Center for Asia Leadership" in the Harvard University, USA, Mr. Belal has been instrumental in arranging exchange of visits of students and fellows from Harvard University to Bangladesh on a regular basis. As an active member of alumni in the Harvard and few other universities, Mr. Belal is blessed to have a vast network of friends and peers across the globe. Ambassador Belal looks forward to availing their good will to make the workings of Trust Fund for Victims as a vocation for all people to bring much needed solace to the victims.

Personal details

Name: Sheikh Mohammed Belal (Mr.)
Place and date of birth: Chittagong, Bangladesh, 5 October
Marital status: Married, two children
Nationality: Bangladeshi
Profession: Diplomat and International Foreign Service.

University education:

2012: Masters in Public Administration (MPA), Harvard Kennedy School, United States of America.
1995: Masters in Foreign Affairs and Trade, Monash University, Australia
1990: Bachelor of Science in Forestry, University of Chittagong, Bangladesh

Profile

- An activist of "humanity first" and engaged with the alleviation of poverty globally.
- Diplomat and International Civil Servant with experience of over 30 years in diplomacy, trade, investment, disarmament, peace, and justice.
- Passionate activist of justice, rule of law and human rights.
- Professional Mediator with excellent negotiating skills.
- Manager with proven innovative and creative leadership skills.
- Economic diplomat with entrepreneurship skills in both the public and private sectors.
- Environmental activist aimed at honing skills to address the challenges of climate change.
- A promoter of geographical and gender balance in all organizations.
- A strong advocate for international judicial mechanisms and inter-state cooperation to bring perpetrators to justice while ensuring justice to victims.
- An activist for a connectivity driven world where poverty is a responsibility of all.

Professional working experience

April 2020 to present: Managing Director, Common Fund for Commodities (CFC), Amsterdam.

2014 to 2020

- Ambassador Plenipotentiary and Extraordinary to The Netherlands, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia; and Poland (now concluded).
- Bangladesh Permanent Representative to all legal institutions including: the International Criminal Court (ICC), International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC), the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapon (OPCW).

2012 – 2013

Director General in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh with jurisdiction over East Asia and the Pacific and Bangladesh focal point for a number of regional and international organizations. Helped bringing "connectivity" as a core activity of Bangladesh Foreign Policy.

2011-2012

Attended Masters in Public Administration in the Harvard Kennedy School, USA.

2010-2011

Deputy Ambassador in Uzbekistan with concurrent accreditation to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Oversaw bilateral trade of over one and a half billion while bringing the concept of "clean" cotton in our sourcing practices.

2005 – 2010

Deputy Ambassador to United States of America. Bangladesh country focal point in the Capitol Hill and all leading Think Tanks in Washington DC. Trade Representative to all trade negotiations. Also worked as "Press Minister" in the Embassy.

2003 – 2005

Chief of Cabinet of Foreign Minister of Bangladesh. Advising Foreign Minister in all affairs of diplomacy and trade while accompanying the Minister, as a delegate and advisor, to numerous international and regional conferences, seminars and bilateral visits.

2000-2003

Counsellor at Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur. Helped installing the first ever-automated consular payment system in any of Bangladesh Embassies abroad.

1996-2000

Second/First Secretary at Bangladesh High Commission in Australia. Designed and hosted first-ever website of an Embassy of Bangladesh.

1995-1996

Completed Masters in Foreign Affairs and Trade, Monash University, Australia with high distinction.

1996-1991

Undergone trainings in Bangladesh as a junior diplomat and subsequently worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with exposure in United Nations, SAARC, Legal and Administrative affairs.

Publications

"Ganges Water Treaty: Water security for Bangladesh", Master's Thesis at the University of Bangladesh, 1989.

-Regular contributing writer to Diplomat Magazine, Diplomatic Affairs, Holland Times, etc.

Conference and international scholarly activities

-Led/represented Bangladesh in over a hundred conferences and seminars.

-Delivered speeches and Bangladesh country statements in fora like United Nations, Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Forum for Regional Cooperation, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Assembly of State Parties of ICC, OPCW, PCA, CFC, etc.

-Have been a regular speaker on issues relating to poverty and restoration of dignity.

Membership and awards

- Mason Scholarship for MPA in Harvard University, USA.
- AusAID scholarship for Masters in Monash University, Australia.
- Member of Bangladesh Foreign Service Association.
- President of Alumni Association (IAA) of Institute of Forestry and Environmental Association.
- Life Gold Member of IAA.

Languages

Excellent knowledge and proficiency in English and Bengali.

Working knowledge in Urdu, Hindi and Bahasa Malay.

Hobbies

Reading, cricket, football, American NFL, travelling, reading and "giving back" activities.