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WELCOME REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR JAMES F. MORIARTY ANNUAL IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS' RETREAT

Radisson Garden Hotel

May 26, 2009

Assalamu alaykum, and good morning. I am pleased to be here at the USAID Annual Implementing Partners' Retreat. I recognize many familiar faces and some new ones as well. I welcome you all to this annual event where we meet our partners, express our appreciation for your work, and discuss ways to further refine our efforts to help Bangladesh develop. With a population of 150 million people in an area of 60,000 square miles, Bangladesh is one of the world's most densely populated countries. It faces many problems but has unlimited potential.

Bangladesh is an important friend and ally to the United States. We have a longstanding relationship with this country and have provided more than 5 billion U.S. dollars in aid since Bangladesh's independence. Our annual development assistance programs average \$100 million. Our overall annual budget for Bangladesh currently stands at about \$160 million dollars. We will continue this strong bond of friendship and look forward to working with Bangladesh to achieve its goal of a better and more prosperous future for all of its citizens.

Secretary of State Clinton recently highlighted U.S. foreign policy goals. She stated: *"Our priorities are clear. We are deploying the tools of diplomacy and development along with military power. We are securing historic alliances, working with emerging regional powers, and seeking new avenues of engagement. We are addressing the existing and emerging challenges that will define our century: climate change, weak states, rogue regimes, criminal cartels, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, poverty, and disease. We are advancing our values and our interests by promoting human rights and fostering conditions that allow every individual to live up to their God-given potential."*

President Obama, in his budget proposal to Congress, announced that the United States intended to double Foreign Assistance by 2015. The U.S. Government is committed to funding key programs that advance U.S. foreign policy goals. This includes significantly increasing funding for programs that address global climate change, food security, basic education, health, and poverty reduction. USAID provides assistance in close collaboration with you, our implementing partners, and with the Government

of Bangladesh. We work together to help the country recover from disasters, alleviate poverty, and engage in democratic reforms.

In 2008 and 2009, the United States Government provided more than 80 million dollars to help Bangladesh respond and rebuild after Cyclone-Sidr. We will continue to work with the Sidr-affected people to provide new income opportunities, restore assets and help rebuild lives.

In the past year, Bangladesh witnessed major achievements as well as significant challenges. All Bangladeshis can take pride in the transition to democracy from the caretaker government to an elected one through free, fair and credible parliamentary elections. Those elections were the best this country has ever had. The people of Bangladesh spoke through the ballot box, underscoring their commitment to democracy. A new chapter in Bangladesh's history began.

Bangladesh experienced a major setback, however, as a result of the BDR mutiny in February. The effect of the February 25 – 26 Bangladesh Rifles Mutiny can be compared to the trauma felt in the United States in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The Bangladesh Army lost 57 of its most promising officers in a spasm of violence that also resulted in the deaths of another 15 individuals. We are deeply saddened by the tragic loss of life.

The mutiny and its aftermath provided the newly elected government with its first major test. The mutiny reminded us of the importance of civil-military relations, given this nation's history.

There is a great deal at stake in Bangladesh, a moderate Muslim majority country with a history of domestic and transnational terrorism in an important area of the world. We are pleased that our assistance programs have increased in recent years in recognition of the important challenges facing Bangladesh and compelling U.S. interests. Now is a time to redouble our efforts to ensure that Bangladesh's experiment with democracy succeeds. A stable, prosperous, democratic Bangladesh will not only serve the people here but also help advance U.S. interests.

I invite you to recommit yourselves as we work together to address development issues, promote democracy and deny space to terrorism. I assure you that we will continue our support to Bangladesh and to you, our implementing partners, to help the government and people of Bangladesh build a stronger and more prosperous country.

In closing, I would again like to thank you for your efforts and hard work. Our partnership will see Bangladesh move towards a brighter future. I hope this Partners' Retreat today will be a useful forum for you.

Thank you.

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As prepared for delivery
GR/ 2009