

Some Reflections On The Nobel Peace Prize



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Dear Muhammad Yunus, dear friends!

Thanks for inviting us to come to Bangladesh in connection with the opening of the Nobel Peace Prize Exhibition about Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank. Let us give the Laureates and the organizers of the exhibition a big hand!

It is a great honour for Bente Erichsen, Director of the Nobel Peace Center and myself as Chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee to be invited to your country. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

For a long time there have been close connections between Bangladesh and Norway.

And of course after 2006 when your countryman Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, ties have been even closer. Since then Yunus has been visiting Norway so many times that he is almost half Norwegian, at least a quarter Norwegian.

First I would like to talk about the possible role of the Nobel Peace Prize for advancement of world peace. Then I will talk about your own Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank, and their contribution to peace in the world, through fighting poverty.

The Nobel Peace Prize cannot cause peace in the world. But at its best it may contribute.

Why is the world interested in the Nobel Peace Prize?

If you look in the Oxford Dictionary under the Nobel Peace Prize, it will say the following: "The Nobel Peace Prize is the world's most prestigious prize." It doesn't say: "... the world's

most prestigious peace prize," it says: "the world's most prestigious prize." Isn't that wonderful, when you work with the peace prize? There are more than 300 peace prizes in the world. At least we know of 300 and we have information about these 300. There are probably several hundred more, which we have never heard about. And representatives of so many of these other peace prizes have come to Oslo and they have the same question: "Why does everybody know about you and so few know about us?" I will soon give you the answer to that question, but we try to mislead them a little bit at first and we tell them: "That is because we have a jury, a committee of five totally unknown Norwegians, while you have very prestigious individuals on your committees." It is a joke, but not everybody appreciates it.

But it is an interesting question. Why does the world care? Well I will give you four or five reasons. First of all, we have awarded Nobel prizes since 1901. Alfred Nobel was from Sweden. He died in 1896 and the first prizes were awarded in 1901, and we have been doing this for more than 100 years while many of the other peace prizes are very new. They were started after the Second World War so that certainly makes a big difference.

Second, we belong to a family of prizes, the Nobel family. As you know the Nobel Peace Prize is awarded in Norway, while the other four prizes are awarded in Sweden.

The previous director of the Nobel Foundation, Stig Ramel, used to say that the peace prize receives more attention than all the other Nobel prizes put together. One reason may be that everybody has an opinion about peace, while the other prizes are addressing to a more specialized audience. But we are certainly very happy to be associated with the more

objective, the more scientific prizes awarded in Stockholm. It's great to be part of the Nobel family, and this is actually an example of Norwegian/Swedish cooperation that works.

The third reason for the prestige of the Nobel Peace Prize, I would say, is our historic record. Our historic record is decent, it is acceptable, but it is far from perfect. Human beings are not perfect. In my opinion, the most serious is the omission of Mahatma Gandhi. We never gave the Nobel Peace Prize to Mahatma Gandhi. After all Gandhi was the major spokesman for non-violence in the 20th century. Omissions cannot really be bigger than that. The Norwegian Nobel Committee had intended to award Gandhi the prize in 1948, then Gandhi was assassinated. In the statues then in existence he could still have been awarded the prize post mortem, but it was an obvious complication that he was killed. But that's no excuse; he could have been awarded the prize in 1947 or 1946 or even before the second world war. He was shortlisted five times, but he didn't get it.

And if you have studied the list of Nobel Peace Prize Laureates through the 100 years, you will undoubtedly wonder about some of the names. Did HE receive a Nobel Peace Prize? Yes, there are undoubtedly some who did receive the Nobel Peace Prize who maybe shouldn't have.. But that is not the point. The point, I think, is there are remarkably few omissions and remarkably few who received the Nobel Peace Prize who maybe should n't have it. On the whole, the list is respectable and decent.

Then there are some who think because we are so controversial, there must be something wrong with the prize. I think that this is a misunderstanding. Some of our most successful prizes have been very controversial. There is

nothing wrong with controversy. For example when in 1975 we gave the Nobel Peace Prize to the Soviet nuclear physicist Andrei Sakharov, yes of course the Soviet authorities were furious, but again, most of us would consider this a very important decision.

According to the Will of Alfred Nobel the Nobel Peace Prize should be awarded "to the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies, and for holding and promoting peace congresses." And "the champions of peace shall be awarded by a committee of five persons to be elected by the Norwegian Storting (Parliament). It is my express wish that awarding (the Nobel Prizes) no consideration whatever shall be given to the nationality of the candidates, but that the most worthy shall receive the prize, whether he be a Scandinavian or not." So indeed, the Nobel Prizes are truly international prizes!

The Norwegian Nobel Committee does not define peace directly, but of course we define it indirectly. And there are many different roads to peace: There are the politicians who can do much for peace, there are the great humanitarians, there are the human rights activists, and there are those who work for arms control and disarmament. And human rights, although not mentioned in the Will of Alfred Nobel, have been increasingly important. And we have organizations in addition to persons.

The Nobel Peace Prize has also developed over time. It used to be a prize almost exclusively for North Americans and Europeans. It took much too long for the prize to be truly global. The first non-American, non-European who received the prize was the Foreign Minister of Argentina, Lamas, in

1936. Then bishop Albert Luthuli from South Africa received the prize in 1960 for his non-violent struggle against apartheid, and that signaled the true globalization of the prize, and since then, there have been Laureates from all continents. The first Nobel Peace Prize Laureate from Asia was former prime minister of Japan, Eisaku Sata, in 1974. He promised that Japan would never develop nuclear weapons.

Since then we have been paying particular attention to what has been going on in Asia because that is, after all, where almost half of the world's population lives. So, in recent years, we have had the prize to Dalai Lama from Tibet in 1989, the prize to Aung San Suu Kyi in 1991, the prize to bishop Belo and Jose Ramos Horta from East Timor in 1996, the prize to former president Kim Dae Jung from South Korea in 2000, the prize to Shirin Ebadi from Iran in 2003, and of course the Nobel Peace Prize to Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank in 2006. Muhammad Yunus told me that after winning the Nobel Peace Prize he had visited Japan, China and South Korea. And he was overwhelmed by the warm reception he received from these countries. They felt that Muhammad Yunus was one of their own – from Asia! Now the question is: Who will be the next Nobel Peace Prize Laureate from Asia?

But in the meantime let us continue to celebrate the Nobel Peace Prize laureates Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank.

In this connection I would like to quote for you the lecture I gave on behalf of the Norwegian Nobel Committee in Oslo on Dec 10 in 2006 when Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank received the Nobel Peace Prize. The lecture gives the background and the reasons why they were awarded the peace prize:

Your Majesties, Your Royal Highnesses, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

"The Norwegian Nobel Committee has decided to award the Nobel Peace Prize for 2006, divided into two equal parts, to Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank for their efforts to create economic and social development from below. Lasting peace cannot be achieved unless large population groups find ways in which to break out of poverty. Micro-credit is one such means. Development from below also serves to advance democracy and human rights."

Those were the words in which the Nobel Peace Prize award was announced on the 13th of October this year. Today the time has come for well-deserved celebration! Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank: congratulations on the Nobel Peace Prize! And congratulations to you, Mosamat Taslima Begum, who will receive the prize on behalf of Grameen Bank.

Not all the journalists covering the announcement of the award at the Nobel Institute knew who Yunus and Grameen Bank were. Some thought Grameen Bank was a person. Let that be the reporters' problem. The many who did know of both held that they ought to have received the Peace Prize long ago. In 2002, Bill Clinton put it this way: "Dr. Yunus is a man who long ago should have won the Nobel Prize and I'll keep saying that until they finally give it to him." Now Clinton will no longer need to remind us.

This year's award has been well received, internationally, in Norway, and not least in Bangladesh. It almost defies comprehension that when, as chairman of the Nobel Committee, I walk up to a microphone at the Nobel Institute in

Oslo and announce that this year's Peace Prize is going to Yunus and Grameen Bank, politicians and papers in large parts of the world begin to comment on, and to a large extent to applaud, the Norwegian Nobel Committee's choice. And what is even harder to believe: there is an outbreak of joyful demonstrations in Bangladesh. For several days one could almost have described the country as closed because of happiness. Many said that this was the greatest thing to have happened to the country since independence in 1971.

In recent weeks, growing numbers of people have become acquainted with the outlines of Yunus's exciting story. Trained in economics in the United States, he returned to Bangladesh in 1972 and took a chair in economics at the University of Chittagong. In 1974 he underwent a personal crisis during the country's famine. It shook him to see such poverty. And he asked himself, "What is the point of all these splendid economic theories when people around me are dying of hunger?" As early as in 1976, he hit on the idea of opening a bank for poor people. He lent 27 dollars out of his own pocket to 42 craftsmen in a little village in Bangladesh, telling them that they could pay the money back when they could afford to. In the weeks that followed, he gave the matter a great deal of thought, and decided that there would have to be an institutional solution.

The result was Grameen Bank, which is present today in the vast majority of Bangladesh's thousands of villages, and which since its formal opening in 1983 has lent almost six billion dollars. Today the bank has almost seven million borrowers. Grameen Bank lends 800 million dollars per year, in loans averaging just over one hundred dollars. The bank is self-financing and makes a profit. The repayment percentage is very high. Muhammad Yunus says, "Lend the poor money

in amounts which suit them, teach them a few sound financial principles, and they manage on their own".

By means of this year's Peace Prize award, the Norwegian Nobel Committee wishes to focus attention on dialogue with the Muslim world, on the women's perspective, and on the fight against poverty.

First, we hope that this Peace Prize will represent a possible approach to the Muslim part of the world. Since the 11th of September 2001, we have seen a widespread tendency to demonize Islam. It is an important task for the Nobel Committee to try to narrow the gap between the West and Islam. The Peace Prize to Yunus and Grameen Bank is also support for the Muslim country Bangladesh and for the Muslim environments in the world that are working for dialogue and collaboration. All too often we speak one-sidedly about how much the Muslim part of the world has to learn from the West. Where microcredit is concerned, the opposite is true: the West has learned from Yunus, from Bangladesh, and from the Muslim part of the world.

Secondly, this year's Peace Prize places women centre-stage. Over 95 per cent of the borrowers are women, and their liberation is a major concern for Yunus and Grameen Bank. The emphasis on women may have been the most important factor in the success of their work. Women were not alone to begin with, but their proportion rose rapidly. In Yunus's words, "For women to be granted the loan has a definite effect on the family. There is no need to do more research on that today. Children benefit automatically, with better clothes and food. We can see the situation changing". Men often spend the money on themselves; women spend it on the family. The bank's practice has meant a social

revolution in Bangladesh. One of the borrowers, Mazedza Begum, has put it like this: "My parents gave me the birth, but Grameen Bank gave me a life". In today's terminology, microcredit is indeed "female empowerment".

Micro-credit has proved itself to be a liberating force in societies where women in particular have to struggle against repressive social and economic conditions. Economic growth and political democracy can not achieve their full potential unless the female half of humanity on earth contributes on an equal footing with the male.

Thirdly, and most importantly, we have the fight against poverty and for social and economic development. Muhammad Yunus has shown himself to be a leader who has managed to turn visions into practical action for the benefit of millions of people, not only in Bangladesh but also in many other countries. There are now micro-credit programs in nearly one hundred countries all over the world, including Norway. Loans to poor people, most often women, without any financial security had appeared to be an impossible idea. From modest beginnings three decades ago, Yunus has, first and foremost through Grameen Bank, developed microcredit into an ever more important instrument in the struggle against poverty. Grameen Bank has been a source of ideas and models for the many institutions in the field of microcredit that have sprung up around the world.

Numbers soon multiply and swell. But behind each number there is an individual human being. Every single person on earth has both the potential and the right to live a decent life. Across cultures and civilisations, Yunus and Grameen Bank have shown that the poor can work to bring about their own development. In Yunus's words, "Micro-credit is a well-ried

and well-founded method that can bring financial services to the poorest of the poor. Microcredit promotes entrepreneurship, and puts each individual poor person, especially women, in the driving-seat in their own lives". Even beggars have become borrowers in the bank. Yunus believes firmly that alms destroy the initiative and creativity of poor people.

As he wanders about in his Bangladeshi clothes, Yunus is sometimes referred to as a modern Gandhi. He is called the banker of the poorest. And Grameen Bank, which means the village bank, is the world's biggest bank for poor people. Through their deposits, poor people own 94 per cent of the bank. The remaining 6 per cent belong to the Government of Bangladesh. The bank is based on a different philosophy from that of normal banks. Yunus says microcredit is more about people than about money. It is a question of trusting people. Credit means to trust, to give someone "credit".

The poor people organize themselves into groups, often of five women. It is the group that is granted the loan and is responsible for repayment. The group meets regularly to sharpen each other's perceptions of borrowing, work, repayment and saving. The members undertake to work for food production, pure drinking water, hygiene, health, family planning, economy, discipline, community and motivation in the group and in their families. The groups form networks with other groups. At the grass-roots level the groups thus help to build up communities. Groups of women who assume responsibility have also recently been points of departure for vaccination and health programs.

The struggle against poverty in the world is an existential struggle for survival. Today roughly half the world's people

live on less than two dollars a day, and more than one billion live on less than one dollar a day, which is extreme poverty. This means that the majority of people on earth are poor. And the majority of them are women and children. This may be the greatest challenge confronting the world over the next few decades. Every country and nation in the world must contribute. It is shameful that far over half the people in the world live under such conditions.

The struggle against poverty is work for peace of the first order.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Kofi Annan, has said that "Today borders do not go between nations, but between the powerful and the powerless, the free and the enslaved, the privileged and the subservient". The United Nations' number one Millennium Development Goal is to halve global poverty by 2015. Achieving that goal will require global mobilisation. Will you join in, will your country join in, will national leaders join in to meet this challenge? There is a long way to go, but we must travel it together. The aim must be peace with justice in the world. And justice means a life in dignity. The Norwegian Nobel Committee underlines that "lasting peace can not be achieved unless large population groups find ways in which to break out of poverty". Peace with justice must be built from below, by means to which Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank have contributed.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee is often asked which concept of peace it applies. The question has come up this year, too. Although the response to this year's award to Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank has been generally

favourable, some have asked what microcredit has to do with peace. They deserve an answer.

The point of departure is always Alfred Nobel's will. But the fact is that the three criteria for the peace prize which Nobel mentions in his will, work for "fraternity between nations", for "the abolition or reduction of standing armies", and for "the holding of peace congresses", only provide limited guidance. That leaves it to a large extent up to the Norwegian Nobel Committee itself to interpret and concretize the concept of peace. Ever since 1901, this has been a matter for dispute, if not so much within the Committee as in the public domain. When the very first prize was awarded, to Henri Dunant and Frédéric Passy, nearly everyone accepted the pacifist Passy. To some, however, Dunant presented a problem. Was his work relevant to peace? Certainly the Red Cross did excellent work once war had broken out, but what did they do to prevent war?

The earliest prizes went to peace activists of various kinds, to statesmen and, as we have seen, to humanitarian organizations and persons. Then the Committee began awarding the Peace Prize to campaigners for human rights. Again there were prompt counter-arguments. What did human rights have to do with peace? Did not the emphasis on such rights on the contrary tend to arouse conflict? In the 1980s, however, a growing number of political scientists began to take an interest in Immanuel Kant's analyses of the connection between democracy and peace. In due course, more and more of them came to the conclusion that democracies were peaceful, at least in relation to other democracies. This has now become one of the most "robust" findings in modern political science. It is gratifying to see

science now giving its almost unanimous support to a view which the Norwegian Nobel Committee has held for decades.

In 2004, the Nobel Committee maintained that there was a connection between a depleted environment and war and conflict. This year the theme is the struggle against poverty. What has that got to do with peace? This is not something the Norwegian Nobel Committee only hit on this year. Many previous prizes have gone to the struggle against poverty. The distinction between humanitarian work and the struggle against poverty is of course not clear, as the three prizes to the Red Cross and the awards to the High Commissioner for Refugees, Médecins sans Frontières, Mother Teresa etc. all show. In addition, the Nobel Committee has awarded the Peace Prize to the founder of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), John Boyd Orr, and to the man behind the green revolution in agriculture, Norman Borlaug. So in principle this year's Peace Prize is less of a novelty than many appear to believe, even granting that micro-credit as a tool for overcoming poverty is completely new in the context of the Peace Prize.

Sound common sense is not to be despised. Most people would probably agree that the fact that wealthy Europe has been at peace in recent decades, while there have been many conflicts in poverty-stricken Africa, must have something to do with living conditions. The causal connections are complicated; everything can rarely if ever be attributed to a single factor. We would nevertheless intuitively believe that there must be a connection between poverty and conflict. But we do not have to rely solely on intuition. In the summary of research on this subject in **Human Security Report 2005**, we read that "Indeed, one of the most striking findings to emerge from conflict research is that most wars

take place in poor countries, and that as per capita income increases, the risk of war declines". This is not to say that poor people are necessarily more violent than the more prosperous. Central government resources are also important. The more prosperous a country is, the more resources it has with which to resolve the problems that can give rise to conflict.

There is not just one way out of poverty. There are many. This year, however, the Norwegian Nobel Committee wants to draw attention especially to microcredit. This instrument has produced good results in Bangladesh. Over the past few decades the country has recorded considerable economic growth. Some of that growth is certainly due to the operations of Grameen Bank and other institutions in the microcredit field. It will be important to increase the use of this instrument.

In the book **Banker to the Poor — The story of the Grameen Bank**, Yunus asks whether it is really possible to imagine a world without poverty. His own answer is as follows: "We have created a slavery-free world, a polio-free world, an apartheid-free world. Creating a poverty-free world would be greater than all these accomplishments while at the same time reinforcing them. This would be a world that we could all be proud to live in".

Around year 750 the Chinese poet Tu Fu wrote, in Peter Bilton's translation:

Swarming cities are smithies for swords

Better forge a ploughshare, forge a harrow

Where there now are tears and sand

There would be silk and corn

14

The widow would be a farmer's wife at her silk loom

The soldier a farmer behind his ox and plough

Our silent people a choir in a song

For two voices, singing of silk and corn.

Today the Norwegian Nobel Committee wishes to express its admiration for the work Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank have done for thousands upon thousands of ordinary people in Bangladesh and in many other countries. We hope the Peace Prize will be a source of inspiration in the continuing work for a world without poverty. That is not a goal we shall reach in the next few decades. But we are on the way. Today we congratulate and celebrate the two of you, Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank. Bangla: Apnader Shobaikay Ushno Obhinondon: Warmest congratulations to you all! Tomorrow we shall hurry on together towards the goal of a world without poverty."

- This ends my speech in Oslo on Dec 10 2006 in honour of the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank.

Over the years the Norwegian Nobel Committee has widened the definition of peace, we have made it more global, we have come to include more women. There are twelve women who have received the Nobel Peace Prize. Not a particularly good record. But I will like to add that in my five years as chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, 40 per cent of the prize winners are women: Shirin Ebadi from Iran who works on human rights, and Wangari Maathai from Kenya who works on sustained development/ environment as a road to peace. Both of them are outstanding and courageous women. They make a great impact on people everywhere. Shirin Ebadi was

15

the first Muslim woman to obtain the Nobel Peace Prize, and Wangari Maathai was the first woman from Africa to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. By awarding Maathai the peace prize in 2004 environmental protection has become another path to peace.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee is also working for abolishing the nuclear weapons from the earth. Lasting peace is dependent on this. Several prizes have therefore been awarded to persons and organizations in this field, latest in 2005 when the Nobel Committee awarded the Peace Prize to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its Director General, Mohamed ElBaradei.

In 2007, as you know, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Al Gore Jr were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to build up and disseminate knowledge about man-made climate change, and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such change. By awarding the Nobel Peace Prize for 2007 to the IPCC and Al Gore, the Norwegian Nobel Committee is seeking to contribute to a sharper focus on the processes and decisions that appear necessary to protect the world's future climate, and thereby to reduce the threat to the security of mankind. Action is necessary now, before climate change moves beyond man's control.

Muhammad Yunus congratulated the Nobel Committee with a wise decision. He wrote to me: "This has been a most important and timely recognition of one of the most important issues of our time, and one that is particularly close to my own heart. The Nobel Committee mentioned in its citation that climate changes will place particularly heavy burdens on the world's most vulnerable countries. As you well know, my

country Bangladesh, is already paying a very high price for global warming and stands to face even greater challenges in the future. As natural calamities intensify year after year, climate change has already become a question of survival." These are strong words from a wise man!

What can the Nobel Peace Prize achieve?

The Nobel Peace Prize laureates are continuously referring to the world platform they have got through the prize. How they would speak and nobody would listen, then suddenly they would be heard as Nobel Prize Laureates..

The Nobel Peace Prize is also a wonderful dooropener. Archbishop Desmond Tutu from South-Africa, who won the Peace Prize in 1984 for his anti-apartheid work, has told the story many times about how he tried to get access to president Ronal Reagan, but Reagan wouldn't see him because he knew that Tutu would be saying: he would be denouncing apartheid and also America's policy on apartheid. But then, Desmond Tutu received the Nobel Peace Prize and soon came an invitation from the White House. Would he like to see the President? The Prize opens doors.

The Nobel Peace Prize can also be a wonderful protective mechanism. It protected Sakharov in the Soviet union, it protected Lech Walesa in Poland, and to some extent but only to some extent, it has protected Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma. But Aung San Suu Kyi is still in house-arrest in Burma. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991, but she has not been allowed to go to Oslo to receive the prize. I therefore ask all Asian countries to influence the authorities of Burma to release Aung San Suu Kyu so she can be free both in her country and to go to Oslo to give her Nobel lecture.

But then, can the Peace Prize change matters on the local scene? Yes, at its very best it sometimes can, and I will provide you with one example, from East Timor. In 1996 we gave the Peace Prize to Bishop Belo and Jose Ramos Horta from East Timor. They became jubilant. They came to Oslo and said, "Now we will win!" When East Timor later became free from Indonesia, the East Timorse were saying that we, the Norwegian Nobel Committee, should get the credit for this. We said, "No, you are to generous," because the major explanation is the economic and political collaps of Indonesia in 1997-98. But the Prize may have contributed through focusing the eyes of the world on East Timor.

This is what we can do at our very best. We can only rarely achieve such wonders, but the big mystery is first of all, that the world is interested in the Nobel Peace Prize and second that at its best, the prize can actually affect political realities as far from Norway as you can get.

In concluding my lecture, I appeal to all individuals, to all students, to all peoples and to all nations of the world:

- Let us create a world without poverty.
- Let us build peace and prevent war.
- Let us make the world a better place to live in for young and old.
- Let us focus on human integrity and human rights.
- Let us fight diseases and infant mortality..
- Let us fight global warming and protect the environment.
- Let us increase human security everywhere.
- Let us work for a world free of nuclear weapons.

Let justice, respect and cooperation prevail among peoples and nations in the world.

We all have dreams.

I have dreams for the role of the Nobel Peace Prize in contributing to world peace.

I am sure you will join me in realizing my dreams.

You have dreams for prosperity and peace for Bangladesh. I will join you!

You have dreams for a good life for future generations in Bangladesh. I will join you!

We have all dreams for peace with justice in the world. Let us do it together!

I am convinced that Asia has a very important role to play!

The great Norwegian poet Olav H. Hauge also had a dream. He has written the beautiful poem "It's the Dream", that I would like to conclude with:

- "It's the dream we carry in secret
- that something wonderful will happen
- that must happen
- that time will open
- that the heart will open
- that doors will open
- that springs will gush -
- that the dream will open
- that one morning we will glide into
- some harbour we didn't know was there."

I wish you all good luck with the realizations of our dreams for a peaceful world for future generations! And for a prosperous Bangladesh!

I salute the country of Bangladesh!

I salute the people of Bangladesh!

I salute Grameen Bank!

And last but not least: I salute you, my dear friend Muhammad Yunus. You are one of the most charismatic persons I have ever met! I admire your work!

I congratulate you all:

Apnader Shobaikay Ushno Obhinondon.

Thank you – thank you – thank you!

Ole D. Mjøs

Chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee