**National Progress Report/ Statement of Secretary, Ministry of Information, Government of the People’s Republic Bangladesh in the 5th Annual Meeting of OIC Broadcasting Regulatory Authority Forum (IBRAF) to be held in Bandung, Jawa Barat, Indonesia on 21-24 February 2017**

Respected Chair

Secretary General of IBRAF

Distinguished Delegates

Eccellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalamu Alaikum Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatuh and good afternoon to you all.

First of all I would like to express my sincere gratitude to IBRAF, OIC and Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) for arranging such an excellent event for extending the warm hospitality towards us. It is a great pleasure to be present here at the 5th Meeting of IBRAF in the beautiful city of Bandung.

Respected Chair,

I am confident that the deliberations and presentations to be made by the participants will lead to lively discussion and bear a fruitful conclusion at the end of the meeting under your skillful conduct and proper guidance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the inception of this Forum we have assembled today for the 5th time of its annual meeting. I believe, with the passing of time we have gathered valuable experiences and have become stronger in organizational capacities. We are here to share our experiences and to make new work plan to reach our targets set by the Forum at different times.

Dear Participants,

We are passing through a difficult time as far as the conditions of the Muslims in international arena are concerned. Muslims are being victimized en masse by organized violence, namely war in some places of the world. Thousands of them are being rendered homeless everyday forcing them to seek refuge to other countries where they are not so welcomed. They are not welcomed there because in the psyche of the people of those countries there is a fear about Islam and Muslims, which is called ‘Islamophobia’.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We know that there is a current obsession in the mainstream Western media pertaining to Islam and the West. This obsession is marked by negative signifiers with the global media’s predominantly negative portrayal of Islam and Muslims, which depicts Muslims generally as violent, fanatical, bigoted or as extremist and terrorists. The plight of the war-torn Muslim population is less covered in the Western media compared to the coverage on terrorist acts in few of Muslim countries. Many achievements in socio-economic sectors of the Muslim countries remain unnoticed by the Western media.

Dear participants,

Let me now present at a glance the current situation of media in Bangladesh.

Media in Bangladesh is ‘active and vibrant’ which is acting as key force for encouraging reforms, holding government accountable and promoting public debate that is essential for democracy. The journalists working in media play a crucial role in promoting the development of human rights in Bangladesh especially the rights of women and children. Media of Bangladesh have been playing vital role in promoting peace in the society ensuring communal harmony by advertising true image of Islam and Muslim Ummah. Present government of Bangladesh under the leadership of Hon’ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, daughter of our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman pursues basic principles of Islam that stresses communal harmony, peace and non-violence.

Around 88% people of Bangladesh are Muslims. They are pious and committed to upholding the true image of Islam. At the same time they are tolerant and respectful to the followers of other religions. Non-Muslims in Bangladesh enjoy full freedom in practicing their own religions. We are strongly against using religion as political weapon. Bangladesh Condemns the blame game campaign of certain quarters in equating Islam with terrorism. Bangladesh believes that it’s a conspiracy against Islam and 1.5 billion Muslims.

Respected Chair

Role of Media in Bangladesh are very significant in advertising real essence and image of Islam and portraying non-violent character of Islam. As a regulatory Ministry, the Ministry of Information facilitates and coordinates media efforts to portray true image of Islam and Muslim Ummah. Government of Bangladesh promotes, coordinates, supports and facilitates the media’s approach and efforts in disseminating information in the right time and in the right manner. Government and media work jointly in disseminating information on different social, human and development issues including true spirit of Islam. Private media are spontaneous to broadcast contents on different issue including true image of Islam.

**Ladies and gentlemen**

I would like to inform you about some of the initiatives, actions and steps taken in recent years by the government of Bangladesh in order to make the media more effective. These are:

\* The Government has introduced Right to Information act 2009 for ensuring free flow of information and people’s right to information. An Information Commission is working for implementing the Act.

\* Licensing of 32 Community Radio Stations, of which 17 are currently operating, to aware the marginalized people living in the remote areas with a view to ensuring their overall empowerment and development. 22 FM radios are also operating now along with 12 Government Radio stations.

Bangladesh opened a new era in media sector by allowing private TV channels to operate in the country 20 years ago. Currently 4 government and 26 private TV channels are operating. A few more channels will be coming into operation shortly. More than 100 TV channels [local and foreign] are now broadcasting their programme in Bangladesh.

\* The Government has two institutions to provide training to broadcast and print media journalists. National Institute of Mass Communication provides trainings for officials under various departments of the Ministry of Information and also for personnel working in private Radio, Television and Film Media. The Government has strengthened the Press Institute of Bangladesh to provide training to journalists belonging to different media.

\* Film and Television Institution has been established which offers training to film makers.

\* The Government has taken steps to improve the condition of journalists. It has enacted the Journalist Welfare Trust Act, under which Journalist Welfare Fund has been constituted. From this Fund poor and disabled journalists and the families of poor and dead journalists are being provided financial assistance regularly.

**Respected Chair**

In 2014 we adopted National Broadcasting Policy in order to create social framework for establishing sustainable media interventions. Salient Features of the National Broadcasting Policy are:

1. Establish free and independent media through upholding the fundamental rights and independence of the citizen;
2. Maintain international standard to ensue freedom of expression and pro-people broadcast media through maintaining neutrality, accuracy and diversity;
3. Enhance public-private partnership for further strengthening of the broadcast media;
4. Necessary initiatives to develop broadcast quality;
5. Role of media in establishing equity and equality;
6. Discipline in the broadcast sector by establishing integrated management system;
7. Promote national culture, history, tradition, spirit of liberation war, social values;
8. Ensure good governance and universal human rights through establishing transparent and accountable broadcast system;
9. Establishment of National Broadcasting Policy.

**The process of formulation of Broadcast Act is currently underway. Under this Act there will be a Broadcast Commission which will mainly -**

* Prepare a Code of Guidance for Broadcasters;
* Monitor the implementation of the National Broadcasting Policy;
* Lay down the standards of quality of services provided by the broadcasters;
* Adjudicate between consumers and service providers;
* Constitute Broadcasting development fund for purpose of public service programme;
* Facilitate competition and promote efficiency in the operation of the broadcasting services so as to facilitate growth in such services.

**Dear participants,**

Bangladesh offers following services for the media activists of the OIC member states:

* Training on media and journalism in our training Institutions;
* Support in preparing media contents;
* Support in formulating policy, law and regulation relating to media.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I mentioned earlier that the Western media is portraying negative image of Islam and the Muslims. IBRAF can play a very significant role to counteract the campaign by portraying true and peaceful picture of Muslim Ummah. It can initiate and facilitate dialogue between OIC member countries as well as with other global forums to launch organized campaign to uphold Islam and the Muslims positively. It can also facilitate media literacy campaign in OIC countries as the theme of this year’s meeting is ‘Media literacy and media landscape for global harmony’. When the people become media literate, any attempt to vilify any group of people belonging to any religion or race fails. Media literacy is also essential for media persons so that they can find and interpret data available from independent sources reducing dependence on biased sources.

Media can play a vital role in building strong, fair and open societies. Many of the Muslim countries have growing economies, increasingly robust democracies and vibrant civil societies which are opening new opportunities and driving progress against poverty and disease. Our media can portray these positive aspects and IBRAF can facilitate dialogue and exchange of programmes with other international media organizations to restore the damaged image of Islam and Muslims.

With this, I conclude my deliberation.

Thank you.