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Introduction to the Special Issue on the Blue Economy of Bangladesh

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Over the past five years, Bangladesh has been transitioning toward a sustainable ocean economy or blue economy, triggered by a peaceful resolution over the maritime boundary with Myanmar and India in 2014, resulting in the expansion of Bangladesh's territorial waters by more than 30%. As a result, Bangladesh gained sovereign rights over almost 118,813 sq. km in the Bay of Bengal. This change has opened a new horizon of economic opportunities through creating jobs and boosting growth in different sectors such as marine fisheries, marine aquaculture, tourism, trade and energy.

To ensure sustainable growth in support of the long-term development of the country, marine resources must be managed in a sustainable way. In pursuit of that, since 2014, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has initiated discussions with stakeholders in order to adopt the concept of a 'blue economy' across relevant policies and strategies. By definition, the blue economy fosters the idea of sustainably deriving economic value from the untapped potential of marine resources using sustainable solutions and innovations for increasing food security, improving nutrition and health, alleviating poverty, creating jobs, increasing trade and industrial profiles while protecting ecosystem health and biodiversity, and maintaining regional peace and security.

This Special Issue focuses on Bangladesh's transition to a blue economy through the analysis of existing and potential sectorial opportunities and constraints. It also provides a way forward in terms of actions to be carried out for the sustainable development of ocean economy sectors. It has been elaborated on the outcome of the Joint Collaboration on Blue Economy between the Government of Bangladesh, and its development partners, the European Union and the World Bank. This partnership was created to enhance the outreach of expertise and also to create synergies for better implementation of Blue Economy activities in Bangladesh.

Papers included in this special edition have been prepared during a series of workshops held at both national and regional levels. Discussions with representatives of administrations, researchers, academics and practitioners have further contributed to define and analyze major opportunities and constraints that Bangladesh is facing in implementation of its Blue Economy policy. Therefore, this Special Issue brings new elements of thought leadership in understating the development of Blue Economy in Bangladesh. The papers may be useful for other ocean-facing nation's too.

The issue includes eleven papers that together cover a range of important economic sectors for which information is available and addressing some of the key issues facing Bangladesh:

- The first paper, “Initial Measures of the Economic Activity Linked to Bangladesh’s Ocean Space and Implications for the Country’s Blue Economy Policy Objectives” presents the main findings of the report titled *Toward a Blue Economy: A Pathway for Sustainable Growth in Bangladesh* prepared by the World Bank and partners (P.G. Patil, et al., 2018). This report provides a baseline assessment of the structure and size of the Blue Economy in Bangladesh.

- In the second paper, Hussain et al. provide projections to 2030 and beyond of the potential importance of the maritime activities including the highlights of challenges and constraints.

- Hossain focuses on the environmental dimension of the Blue Economy in the third paper by analyzing the importance of ecological services such as carbon sequestration, coastal protection and other key services provided by coastal ecosystems, especially mangroves. The paper also discusses the necessity to prevent and control pollution originating both from the land and the sea.

- Rouf et al. give an overview in the fourth paper of the major stakes that the Blue Economy will face in the near future: pollution, climate change effects etc. Moreover, with food production, shipping and trade, as well as new technologies have been highlighted and presented in this paper.

- Sarker et al. provide a strategic framework for climate change resilient Blue Economy practices in Bangladesh in the fifth paper. They highlight the consequences of extreme events and other climate changes manifestations such as coral bleaching, species migration, biodiversity loss, altered species lifestyle, and disruption in marine food chain that ultimately affect the national economy.

- Sharifuzzaman, Golder, M and Hossain go deeper into the marine food production and provides an analysis of the marine fishery management requirement alongside the development of the marine aquaculture in the sixth paper.

- In the seventh paper, Uddin, et al. give a detailed overview of the blue biotechnologies, innovative energy technologies and other initiatives that can emerge rapidly with a sound policy and the development of public-private partnerships.

- Das and Shahin explore one of the unique features of the marine economy of Bangladeshi ‘ship breaking’ in the ninth paper.

- Marine Spatial Planning is a key tool for dealing with the interactions between the economy and the environment in the context of Blue Economy. Its use in Bangladesh is examined in paper ten by Hassam and Alam.

- Future marine tourism and more particularly eco-tourism are explored by Nobi and Majumder by highlighting the natural resources of Bangladesh that could support tourism and examining the major obstacles to the development of blue tourism.

- In the final paper, Failler et al. provide a set of possible policy interventions, in the area of coordination and sectorial planning for the implementation of the Blue Economy in Bangladesh.

References

P.G. Patil, J. Virdin, C.S. Colgan, M.G. Hussain, P. Failler, and T. Vegh (2018). *Toward a Blue Economy: A Pathway for Sustainable Growth in Bangladesh*. Washington, DC: The World Bank Group.