Mr. Snehal V. Soneji, Country Director, OXFAM Bangladesh; Additional Secretary and NPD of the Comprehensive Disaster Management Program (CDMP) Mr. Mohammad Abdul Qayyum; Professor Dr. Mehedi Ahmed Ansary; distinguished guests and participants, a very good morning to you all. I would like to congratulate and thank OXFAM for organizing this important workshop on the ‘Role of Private Sector in Humanitarian Response and Preparedness’. This workshop will surely be useful in exploring innovative ways of disaster preparedness with ideas from different stakeholders from the society, including the financial institutions, telecoms, apparel exporters, power and energy, pharmaceuticals, agro and consumer goods producers, and social media.

I believe both the public and private sector have the responsibility to make their services more humane, and respond to any disaster or human losses as part of their social responsibilities. Recognizing that without embracing the disadvantaged population segments into the development process, economic growth cannot be sustained, Bangladesh Bank, besides its core responsibility of maintaining price and macro stability, has been motivating all banks and financial institutions into a broad range of direct and indirect CSR engagements. These include humanitarian relief and disaster responses, investment in human capital such as education and health, and training programs for the potential entrepreneurs, particularly women.

For some years now, Bangladesh Bank has been instilling socially responsible business ethos in the financial institutions by mainstreaming CSR in their corporate goals and objectives, and guiding them into in-house and community based CSR engagements. You will be happy to know that CSR engagements of the financial sector have expanded several-fold over the past few years, from Taka 554 million in 2009 to Taka 5.2 billion in 2014, as direct support for socioeconomic empowerment of the less well-off population segments with extensive schemes in the areas of health, education, and emergency disaster relief. Further, lending support for environment friendly output practices- in renewable energy, effluent treatment, and adoption of energy efficient output processes has been widened.
To steer the campaign on socially responsible financing, Bangladesh Bank has set up a separate department for green banking and CSR in 2012. Under the CSR umbrella, Bangladesh Bank has taken a number of noteworthy initiatives such as supporting the victims and volunteers of Savar Tragedy with the contribution of one day salary of our employees. During the Tazreen Fashions and Rana Plaza incidents, causing well over 1100 fatalities and manifold more debilitating injuries, our financial sector and the broader business community have come forward with prompt, generous fund support for the rescue and relief efforts. Together the banking community have donated Taka 1.9 billion to the 'Prime Minister’s Relief Fund' for creating employment for the victims. Recently, Bangladesh Bank has donated more than half a million Taka to the Burn Unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) to help the burn survivors’ rehabilitations. We have also helped generate nearly Taka 100 million for the Unit from different banks and business houses. We have also formed an annual permanent 'Disaster Relief Fund' of Taka 50 million, and are supporting Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defense, and other relevant government agencies to build their skills and technical capacities. The financial sector has distributed 1.8 million blankets this winter, which is more than double compared to the last year’s figure. The financial institutions also made an attempt to distribute these warm clothes to the extreme poor in the remote area.

To conclude, the private sector should continue and broaden their CSR engagements focusing not only on one-off emergency humanitarian and disaster relief, but also towards widening of advancement opportunities for the weaker and less fortunate through investing in productive farm and non-farm micro, small and medium enterprises, and environment friendly output activities. The Government and Bangladesh Bank always encourage and support such activities. I believe this is how we can ensure an equitable and peaceful society. I thank OXFAM again for bringing together the stakeholders from such diverse sectors, which will reinvigorate our humanity and strengthen our CSR campaign.

Thank you all.