It is a matter of great pleasure for me to be present here at the seminar on "Global War on Terror: Bangladesh Perspective", organized by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS). Perhaps no other issue has been so much debated in the contemporary world as the issue of international terrorism. I commend BIISS for selecting this important topic for today's seminar.

Mr. Chairman,

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon. But the world became fully aware of the real danger of terrorism after the terrorist attacks on two cities of the USA on 9/11/2001. In response, the US declared "War on Terror" that resonated throughout the world and many countries including Bangladesh joined the fight against terrorism. The global consensus behind the War on Terror has underscored the fact that terrorism is a common enemy of all - it threatens international security, national security and human security. Hundreds of people across the world are being killed, displaced or critically wounded by acts of terror. The victims of terrorism are innocent civilians, especially women and children. In Bangladesh, the 17th August countrywide bomb explosions and the subsequent killing of judges have underscored the fact that no society is immune from terrorist
attacks. As a victim of terrorism ourselves, we express sympathy and solidarity with all the countries that have been victims of this scourge.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Bangladesh's commitment to fight international terrorism has been unequivocal. In the multilateral context, Bangladesh has become party to 12 UN counter-terrorism conventions and protocols and is making serious efforts to comply with the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions. Bangladesh is also a party to the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism, along with its Additional Protocol. As a member of OIC, ARF and BIMSTEC, Bangladesh makes significant contribution in advancing counter-terrorism efforts of these organizations. Bilaterally, we are cooperating with friendly countries, including the United States, in the fight against terrorism. In this regard, I want to pronounce a word of appreciation for the US assistance in building our counter-terrorism capacity.

It was because of the historically tolerant and non-communal nature of our people, we never thought that we would face extremism or terrorism in the name of religion on our own soil. But the countrywide bomb blasts on 17 August was a wake up call for all of us. The Government has since dealt with these extremist elements with firm hand. The Prime Minister has declared "zero tolerance" to extremism and terrorism. Activities of a number of organizations have been banned because of their involvement in militancy and terrorism. All the kingpins of these organizations have been arrested and are being prosecuted and tried under the existing laws of the land. New laws are being enacted to strengthen the domestic anti-terrorism regime. In addition to legal and law enforcement measures, we are also pursuing innovative
'Motivational Measures' in order to stop abuse of religion as a pretext for undertaking such subversive activities.

Mr. Chairman,

Threat of international terrorism has compelled many powerful countries to redraw their national security strategy. In Bangladesh also, adequate attention and resources are being devoted to deal with the issue of terrorism. The Government's commitment to fighting terrorism has already been appreciated by the international community. It is heartening to note that the international community, including the United States, has time and again held out Bangladesh as a strong ally in the war on terror.

Despite our spectacular success in dealing with extremism and terrorism, we do not suffer from complacency. The war on terror is a long undertaking that will have to be fought in a comprehensive manner, requiring national, regional and international efforts. While the speakers of today's seminar will closely examine Bangladesh perspective on global war on terror, I would like to underscore few basic parameters that should shape our response in this context:

First, Bangladesh is a victim of terrorism. We will fight terrorism not because the international community demands so; we will fight terrorism because we want to ensure the safety and security of our own people.

Second, terrorism not only kills innocent civilians, it also challenges the authority of the State. We will not allow any external or internal groups to challenge the authority of the State of Bangladesh, irrespective of whether they operate under religious or secular doctrine.
Third, we will not allow any extremist group to use the religious sentiment to foment hatred or divisiveness in our society. Nor shall we allow any group to undermine the moderate and tolerant fabric of our society that shapes the world perception about Bangladesh and earns her friends in the world community.

Fourth, as a committed supporter of global war on terror, we should have a say in shaping the evolving strategy of the global war on terror. We will continue to work with the global community to address the root causes of terrorism, develop a comprehensive convention on terrorism, and find a widely accepted definition of terrorism.

Fifth, we will actively promote inter-religious and inter-cultural harmony. It is our hope that a culture of peace would go a long way towards enhancing understanding and tolerance among peoples and serve as a bulwark against terrorism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At today's seminar, we have heard some lively and dispassionate debate on the issue of "Global War on Terror". The papers presented so far have highlighted many significant thoughts that need to be examined in-depth and I am confident that the afternoon session would also be productive in this respect.

I thank you all.