

Custom PIC24F Bootloader and workflow

Basic Operation and Logic

The PIC24 bootloader is an independent piece of code residing in address range 0x800 to 0x2000 of the flash program memory of the PIC24, i.e. it uses 6kB of the flash memory to store parameters and bootloader code.

The user application (referred to as APP/Firmware APP in further documentation) is the code that can be updated by the bootloader.

- The bootloader cannot delete itself and the only way to remove the bootloader is to erase the PIC24 using an external programmer or make the APP write to the flash address range reserved for the bootloader.
- The bootloader can download a BIN file over SPP link data mode via BC127 module and flash it on to the PIC24 flash memory. Any BIN file sent to the PIC24 must start from 0x0000 and can extend up to the maximum flash size of the PIC24. Data in the BIN in the range of 0x800 to 0x2000 will be ignored as the bootloader will not overwrite itself.
- When generating APP HEX and converting HEX to BIN, MPLAB IDE can be configured to not use flash range 0x800 – 0x2000 for the APP.
- Bin file should be multiples of 512 bytes, as written in bootloader code.

Bootloader Update Workflow

- The bootloader can be entered by triggering a software reset of the MCU. Before causing a software reset, the phone Bluetooth app must put the BC127 in data mode (SPP profile) and paired.
- The phone bluetooth app and device firmware APP should communicate and decide whether or not to trigger an OTA operation by calling a software reset in MCU
- When the software reset occurs in MCU using phone app, execution is transferred to the bootloader from firmware app.
- Bootloader starts downloading the new bin file in OTA mode from Phone app.
- Download speed is limited because of Bluetooth module's 9600 bps SPP link - roughly 1 kByte per sec. Therefore, BIN can only be flashed at ~1 kByte per second.
- Bootloader has 16bit fletcher checksum calculation to verify the downloaded bin file is corrupted.
- If the bin file is not corrupted then new firmware bin file is started executed in PIC24F device, otherwise bootloader will restart the OTA download process again
- BC127 goes back to Command mode when Bluetooth is disconnected in phone app once OTA download process is successfully completed.

APP execution conditions

The bootloader will jump to user firmware app under the following conditions:

- If the firmware app is a fresh factory-flashed firmware app, bootloader directly executes it.
 - If firmware app has been OTA updated and was verified, bootloader executes it.
 - If firmware app was partially OTA updated or corrupted, bootloader switches to recovery mode to redownload new bin file from phone app.
-

GENERATING USER FIRMWARE BIN FILE:

Generating bin file has four major steps:

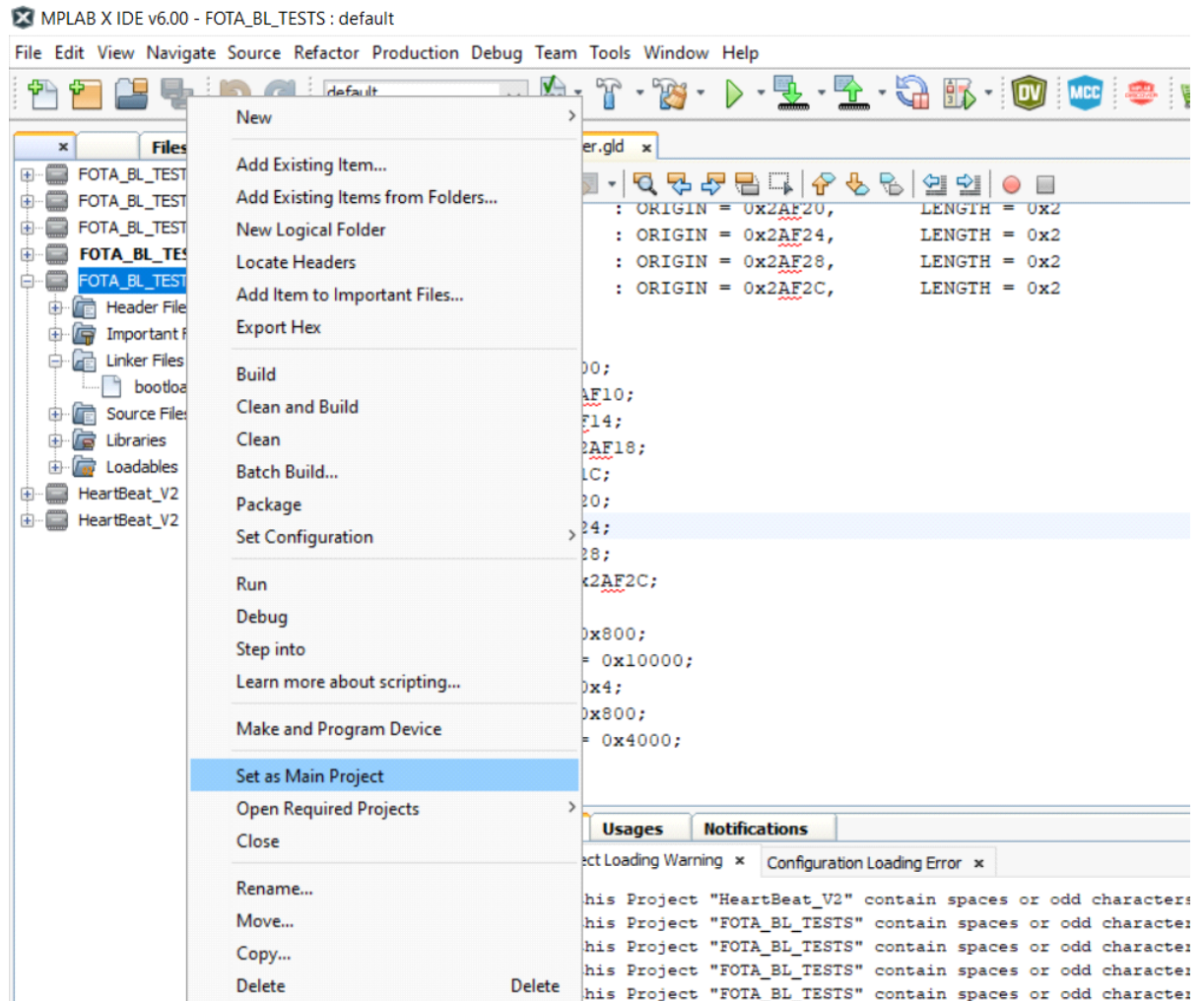
- **Uploading the bootloader code initially using debugger from MPLABX IDE.**
- **Building bootloader friendly firmware app hex file with changes in configuration settings in MPLAB X IDE.**
- **Converting hex file to bin file using makebin.exe tool**
- **Bin file should be converted to multiples of 512 bytes by filling with 0xFF since bootloader accepts only files with 512 byte multiples .**

STEP1 : Bootloader code upload :

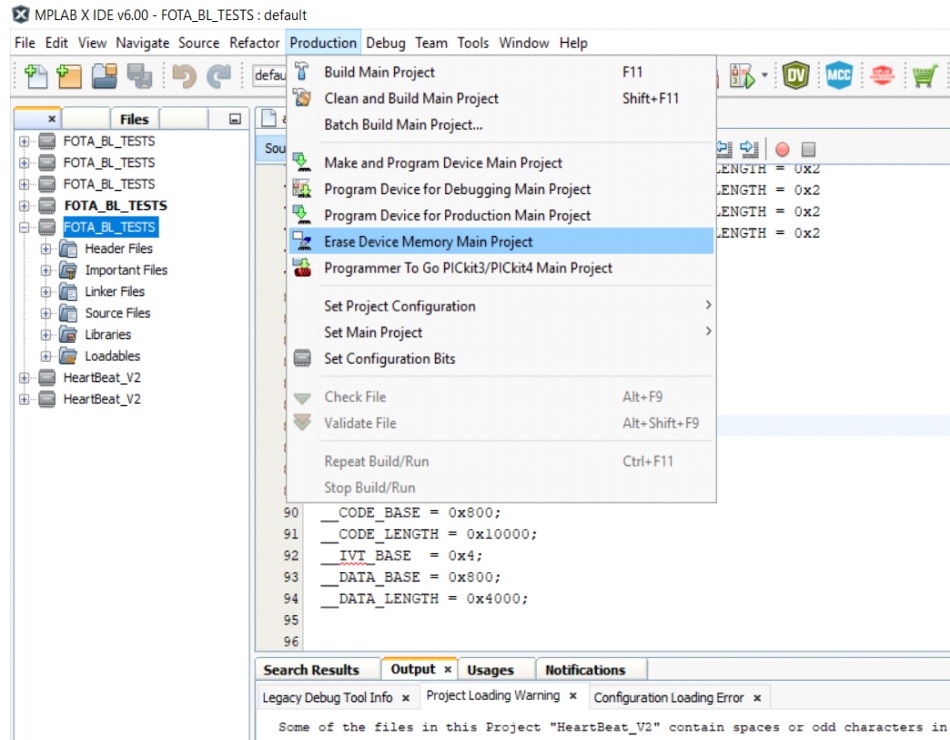
- Bootloader code is named as **FOTA_BL_TESTS** . IT has a file named **bootloader.gld** under **Linker Files** .
- Bootloader.gld has details about bootloader address range. the linker file puts the bootloader starting at 0x800. This can be done by setting program(xr) range.
- In the bootloader GLD file, code base and length as set as below :
 __CODE_BASE = 0x800;
 __CODE_LENGTH = 0x10000;
- The above files and settings are already shared with bootloader code ,just make a note and don't change anything inside it.

UPLOADING PROCESS :

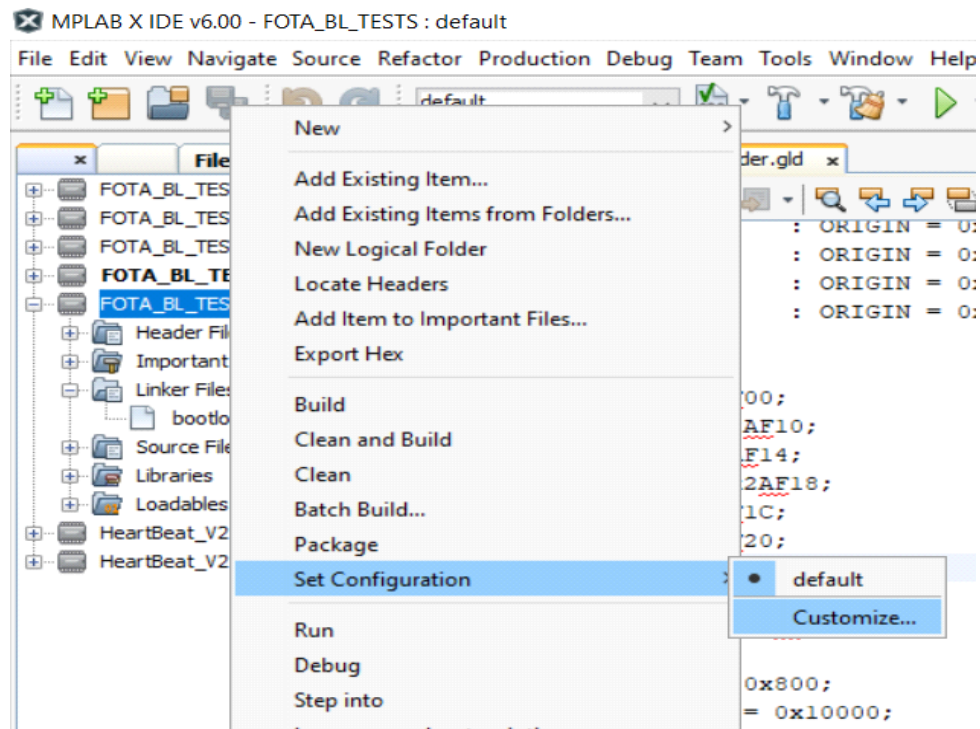
- First select the **FOTA_BL_TESTS** as **main project** if you have multiple projects.



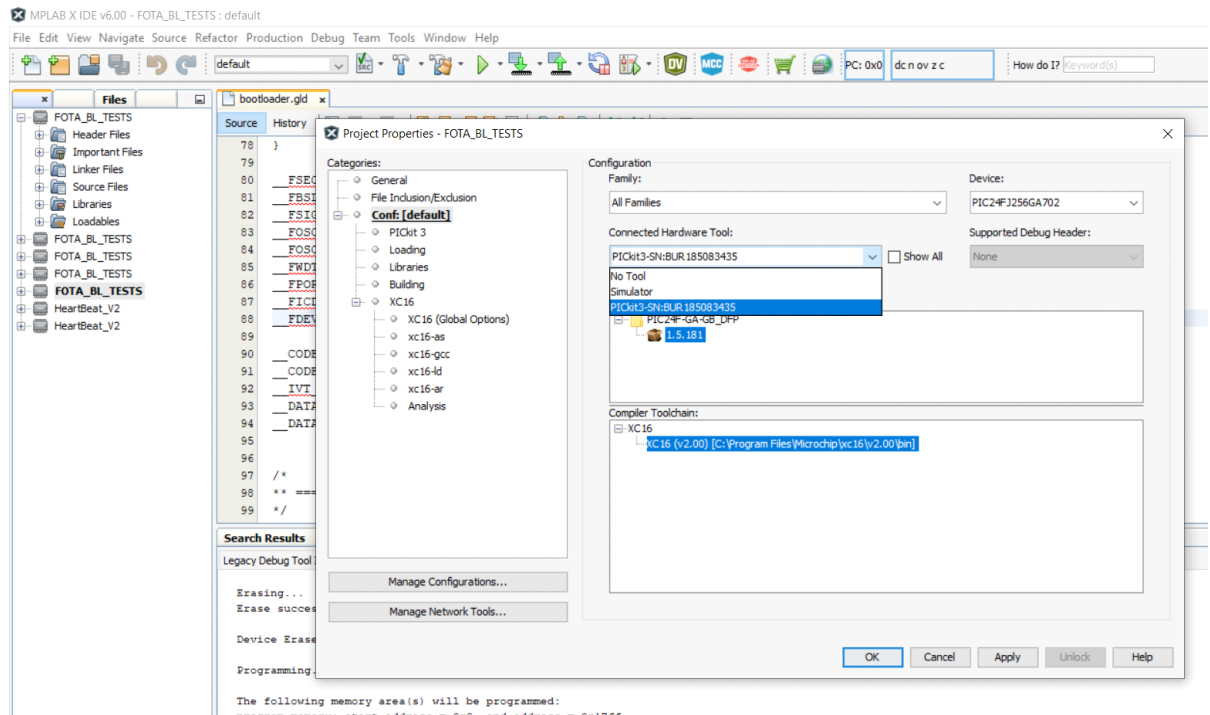
- Erase the Device memory main project and wait till Erase successfully.



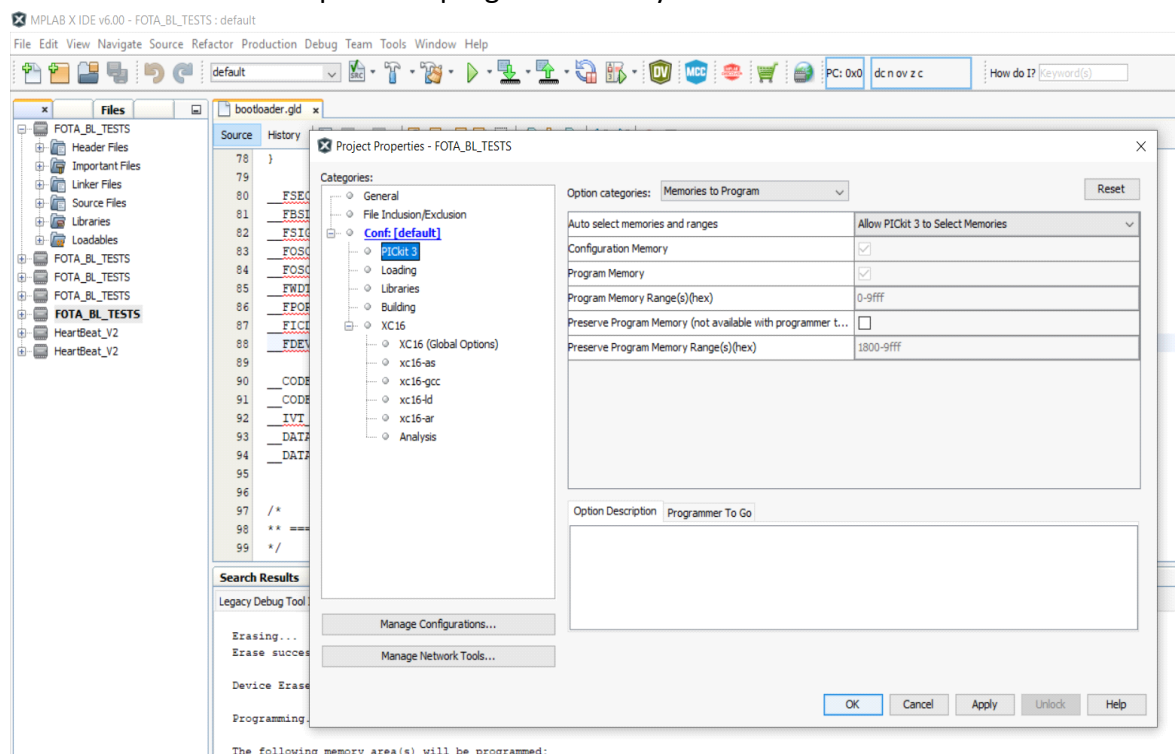
- Select project-> set configuration->customize



- Select tool as PICKIT 3 under hardware tool and apply



- Select PICKIT3 and memory setting as shown below : Allow PICKIT3 to select memories and uncheck preserve program memory



- Now upload the bootloader code into PIC24F device.

- Bootloader GLD file details under linker files shared below .

MPLAB X IDE v6.00 - FOTA_BL_TESTS : default

File Edit View Navigate Source Refactor Production Debug Team Tools Window Help

default

Files

- FOTA_BL_TESTS
- FOTA_BL_TESTS
- FOTA_BL_TESTS
- FOTA_BL_TESTS
- Header Files
- Important Files
- Linker Files
 - bootloader.gld
- Source Files
- Libraries
- Loadables
- HeartBeat_V2
- HeartBeat_V2

appflash.gld x bootloader.gld x

Source History

```

51  *
52  * Or define your own __crt_start_mode function
53  */
54  CRT_STARTMODE(crt_start_mode_normal)
55  #endif
56
57  OPTIONAL(-lpPIC24Fxxx)
58  OPTIONAL(-lfx)
59
60  /*
61  ** Memory Regions
62  */
63  MEMORY
64  {
65      data (a!xx) : ORIGIN = 0x800,          LENGTH = 0x4000
66      reset       : ORIGIN = 0x0,            LENGTH = 0x4
67      ivt         : ORIGIN = 0x4,            LENGTH = 0xFC
68      program (x) : ORIGIN = 0x800,          LENGTH = 0x10000
69      FSEC        : ORIGIN = 0x2AF00,         LENGTH = 0x2
70      FBSLIM      : ORIGIN = 0x2AF10,         LENGTH = 0x2
71      FSIGN       : ORIGIN = 0x2AF14,         LENGTH = 0x2
72      FOSCSEL     : ORIGIN = 0x2AF18,         LENGTH = 0x2
73      FOSC        : ORIGIN = 0x2AF1C,         LENGTH = 0x2

```

Search Results Output x Usages Notifications

Legacy Debug Tool Info x Project Loading Warning x Configuration Loading Error x

MPLAB X IDE v6.00 - FOTA_BL_TESTS : default

File Edit View Navigate Source Refactor Production Debug Team Tools Window Help

default

Files

- FOTA_BL_TESTS
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- Header Files
- Important Files
- Linker Files
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- Source Files
- Libraries
- Loadables
- HeartBeat_V2
- HeartBeat_V2

appflash.gld x bootloader.gld x

Source History

```

74  _FWDI      : ORIGIN = 0x2AF20,          LENGTH = 0x2
75  _FPOR      : ORIGIN = 0x2AF24,          LENGTH = 0x2
76  _FICD      : ORIGIN = 0x2AF28,          LENGTH = 0x2
77  _FDEVOPT1  : ORIGIN = 0x2AF2C,          LENGTH = 0x2
78  }
79
80  _FSEC = 0x2AF00;
81  _FBSLIM = 0x2AF10;
82  _FSIGN = 0x2AF14;
83  _FOSCSEL = 0x2AF18;
84  _FOSC = 0x2AF1C;
85  _FWDI = 0x2AF20;
86  _FPOR = 0x2AF24;
87  _FICD = 0x2AF28;
88  _FDEVOPT1 = 0x2AF2C;
89
90  _CODE_BASE = 0x800;
91  _CODE_LENGTH = 0x10000;
92  _IVT_BASE = 0x4;
93  _DATA_BASE = 0x800;
94  _DATA_LENGTH = 0x4000;
95
96

```

Search Results Output x Usages Notifications

Legacy Debug Tool Info x Project Loading Warning x Configuration Loading Error x

Some of the files in this Project "HeartBeat V2" contain spaces or odd characters.

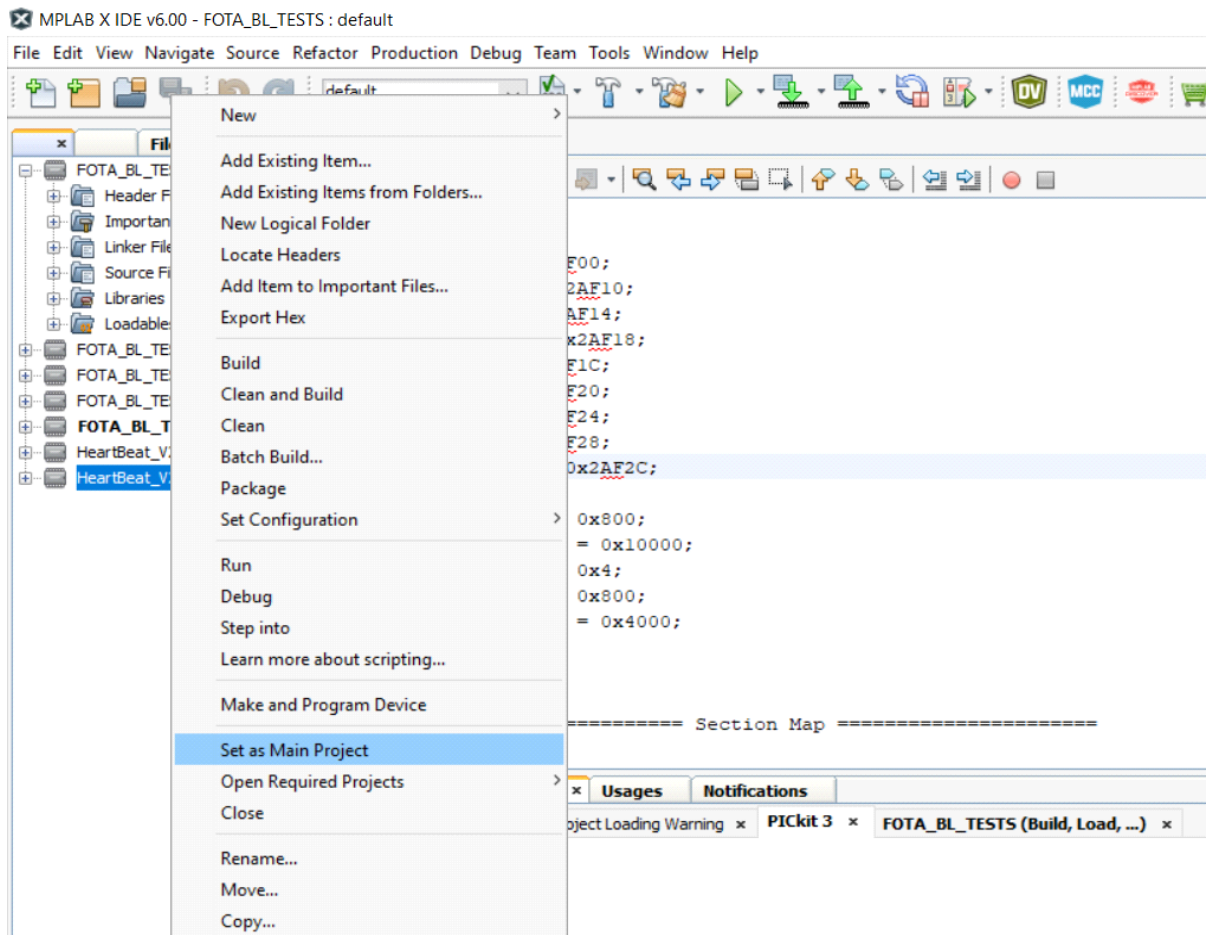
STEP2: BUILDING BOOTLOADER FRIENDLY USER HEX FILE

- Keep the firmware file shared as **base file** and make any changes for future versions. Because it has **flash memory configuration settings and software reset function** included in it.
- User firmware code is named HEARTBEAT_V2 . It has a file named **app.gld** under **Linker Files** .
- app.gld has details about user code address range. the linker file puts the user firmware code starting at 0x2000. This can be done by setting program(xr) range.
- In the app GLD file, code base and length as set as below :
 __CODE_BASE = 0x2000;
 __CODE_LENGTH = 0x16F00;

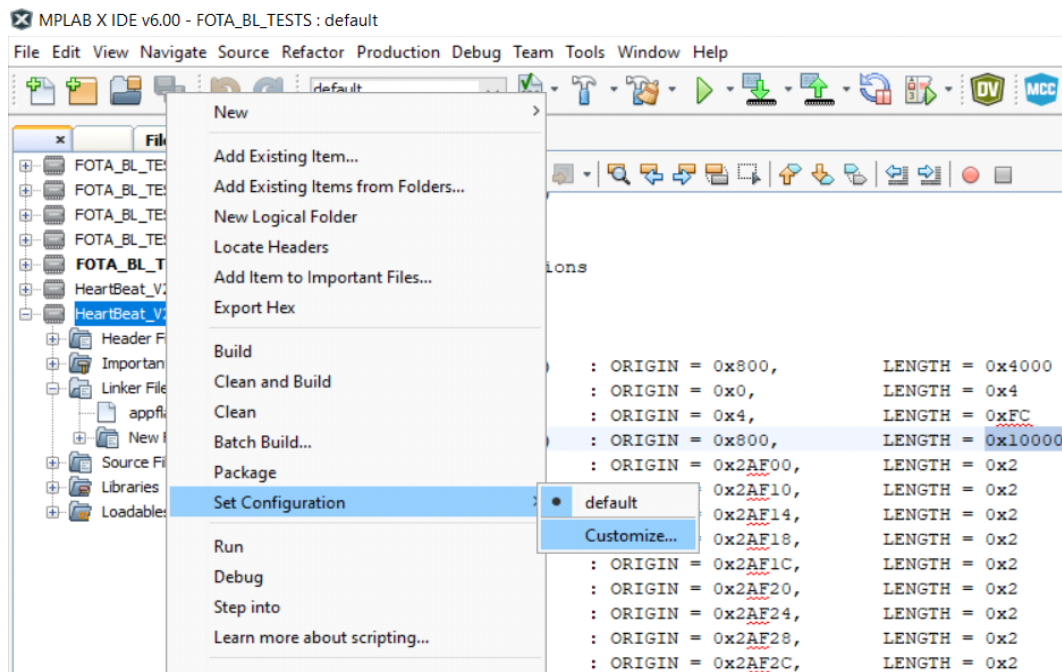
The above files and settings are already shared with user firmware code , just make a note and don't change anything inside it.

Making HEX FILE:

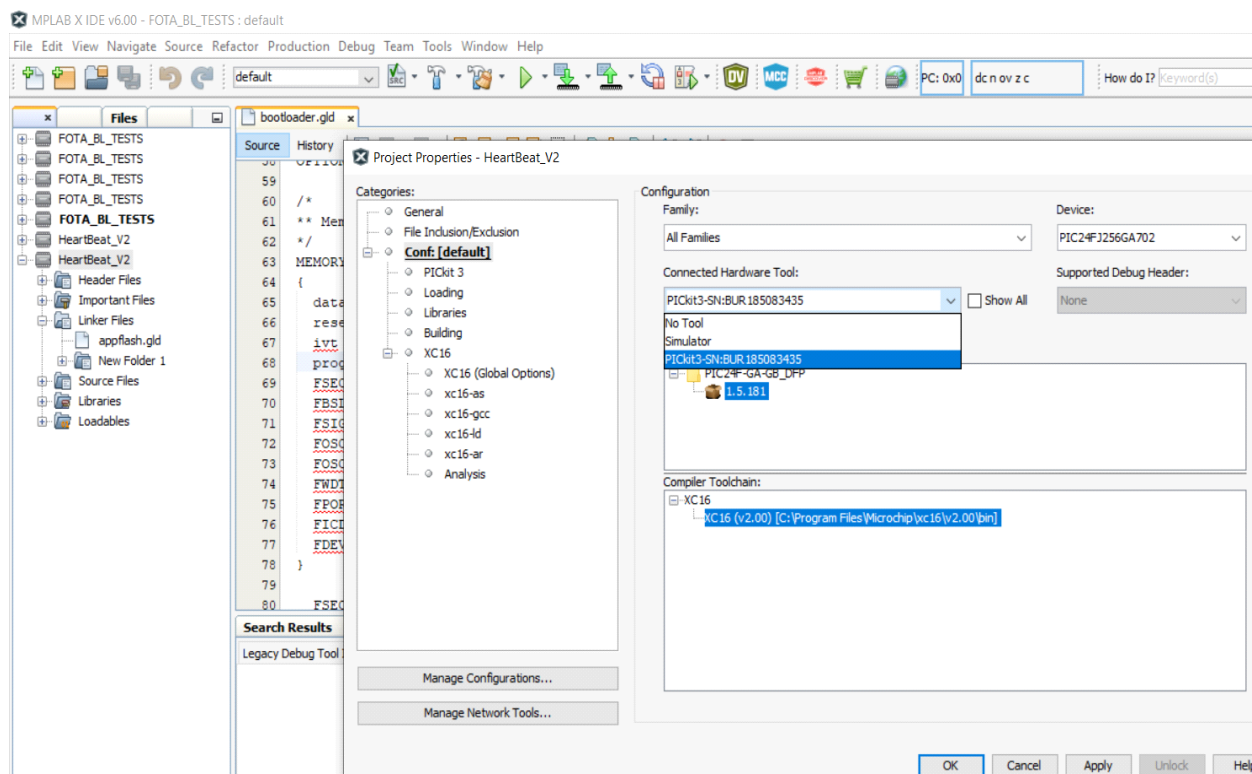
- Select HeartBeat_V2 as **main project** if you have multiple projects.



- Select project-> set configuration->customize



- Select tool as PICKIT 3 under hardware tool and apply



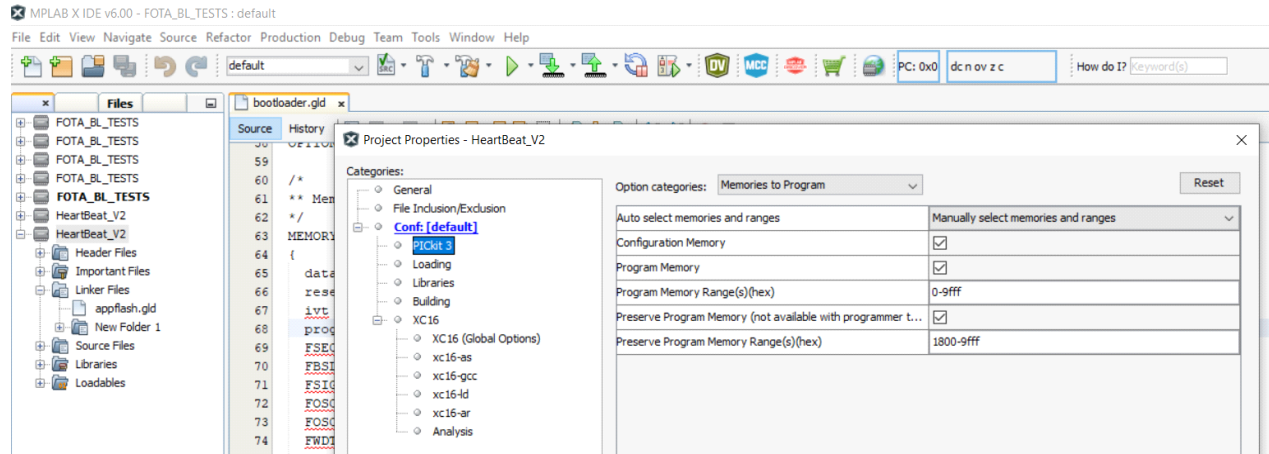
- Select PICKIT3 and memory setting as shown below :

Manually select memories and range .

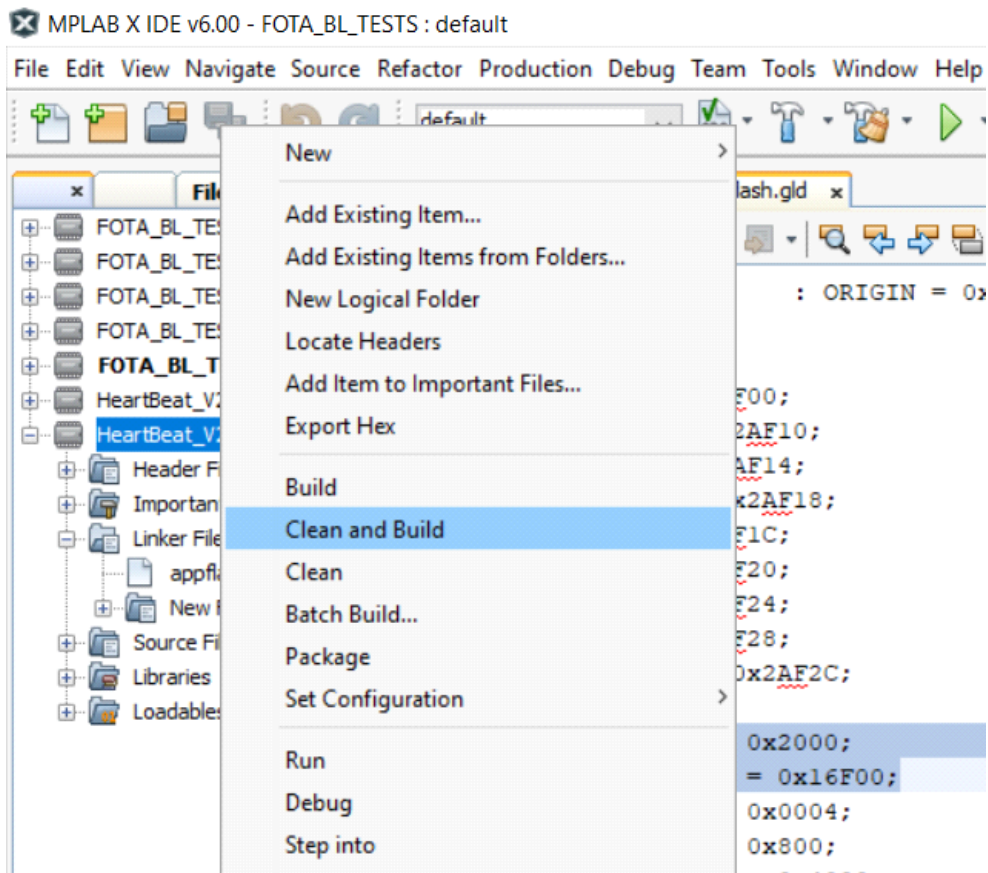
program memory range **-0 -9fff**.

Select preserve program memory.

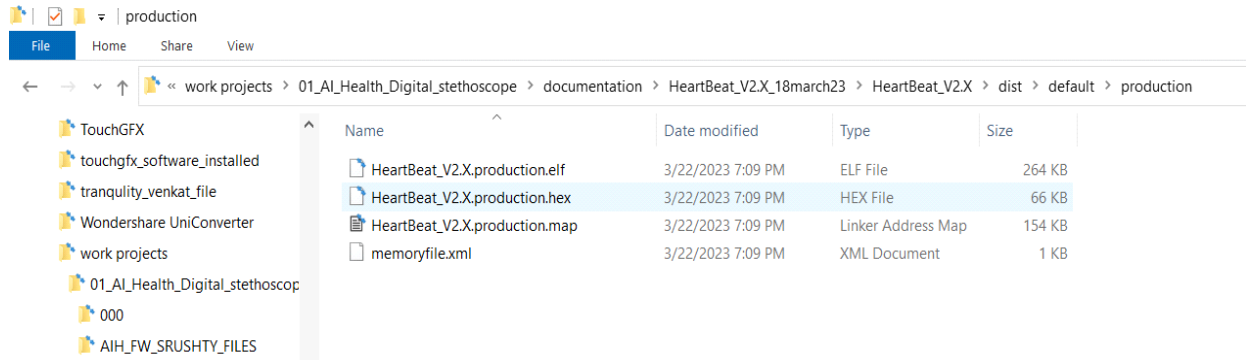
Preserve program memory – **1800 -9fff** . and select apply,ok.



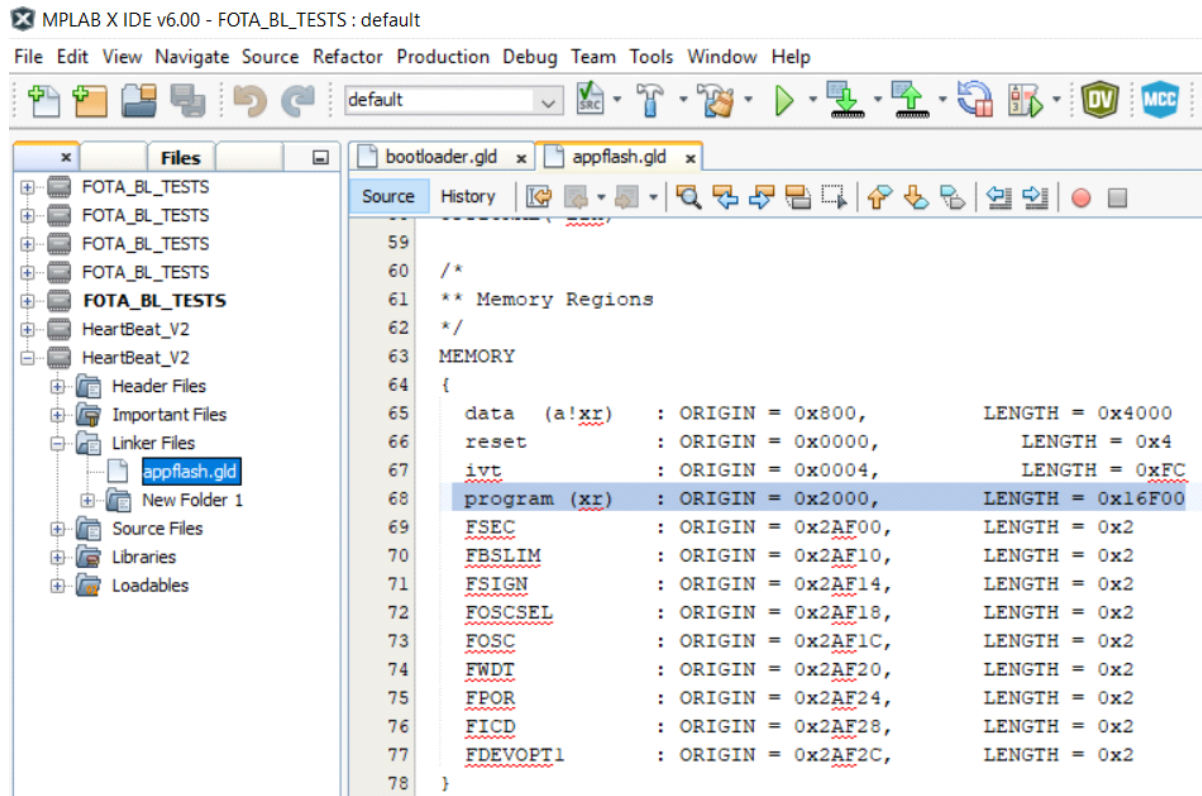
- Now clean and build the project



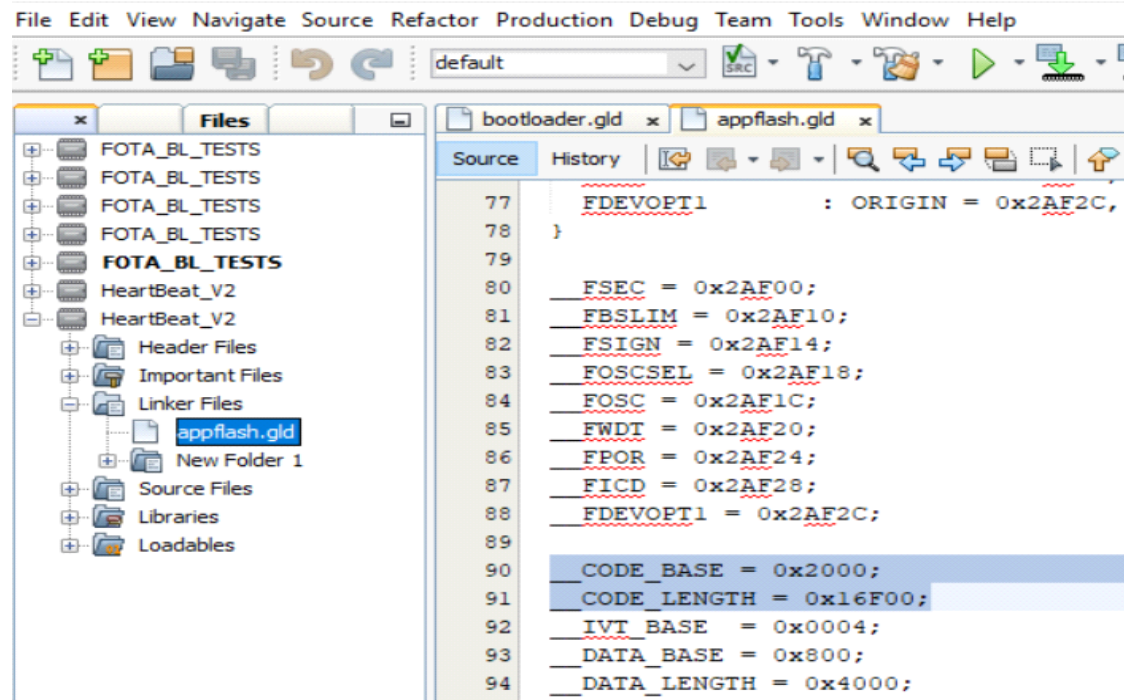
- **HEX** file is generated under project folder location . Copy and save the hex file, which will be used to change to bin file.



- **app.gld** file details are shared below.



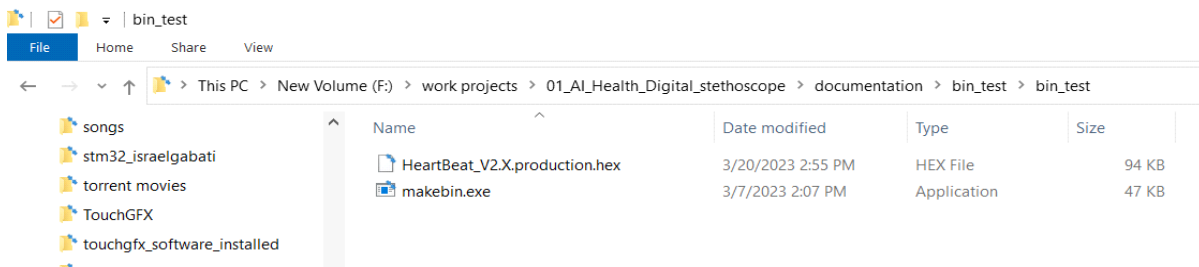
MPLAB X IDE v6.00 - FOTA_BL_TESTS : default



STEP3 : HEX FILE TO BIN FILE CREATION

- We use a tool named **makebin.exe** for hex to bin file conversion

- The **Hex file** to be converted and **makebin.exe** tool should be in same folder as below.



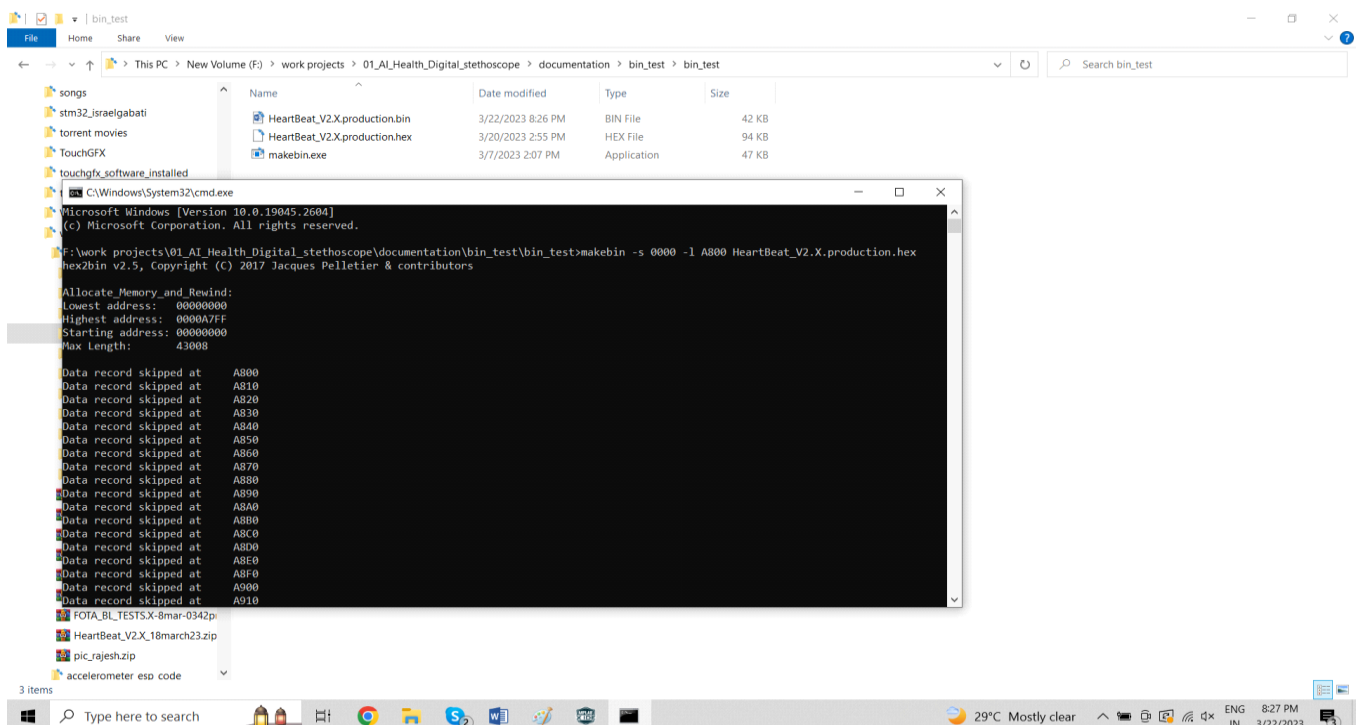
- To generate BIN file for bootloader, in Windows, place the HEX and makebin.exe in same folder, use command line :

makebin -s 0000 -l len filename.hex

where len = 28F00 for entire PIC24 flash, but can be set to a smaller number that covers APP flash size. Setting smaller size will help reduce BIN file size. i.e. if app uses 0x2000 to 0x15600, len can be 0x16000.

Example: makebin -s 0000 -l A800 HeartBeat_V2.X.production.hex

Where A800 – is the len (length that should be multiples of **512 bytes** and minimum range where data should not be skipped) . will check in next step how to calculate len(length).



- Data record can be skipped after memory address 55E30 , not at memory addresses before that as shown above.

-
- The screenshot shows a Windows File Explorer window with the address bar set to `C:\work\projects\01_AI_Health_Digital_stethoscope\documentation\bin_test\bin_test`. The file list shows three items:
- | Name | Date modified | Type | Size |
|------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------|
| HeartBeat_V2X_production.bin | 3/22/2023 8:26 PM | BIN File | 42 KB |
| HeartBeat_V2X_production.hex | 3/20/2023 2:55 PM | HEX File | 94 KB |
| makebin.exe | 3/7/2023 2:07 PM | Application | 47 KB |
- In the foreground, a command prompt window titled `Select C:\Windows\System32\cmd.exe` is open, showing the following output:
- ```

Data record skipped at 8D24
Data record skipped at 8D34
Data record skipped at 8D44
Data record skipped at 8D54
Data record skipped at 8D64
Data record skipped at 8D74
Data record skipped at 8D84
Data record skipped at 8D94
Data record skipped at 8DA4
Data record skipped at 8DB4
Data record skipped at 8DC4
Data record skipped at 8DD4
Data record skipped at 8DE4
Data record skipped at 55E00
Data record skipped at 55E20
Data record skipped at 55E30
Data record skipped at 55E38
Data record skipped at 55E40
Data record skipped at 55E48
Data record skipped at 55E50
Data record skipped at 55E58
Binary file start = 00000000
Records start = 00000000
Highest address = 0000A7FF
Pad Byte = FF
C:\work\projects\01_AI_Health_Digital_stethoscope\documentation\bin_test\bin_test>

```

- Open this link <https://hexed.it/> and click open file and select the hex file to view hex values.

The screenshot displays the HxD hex editor interface. The top menu bar includes options like File, Edit, View, Tools, Settings, and Help. Below the menu is a toolbar with icons for New file, Open file, Save as, Undo, Redo, Tools, Settings, and Help. The main window has two tabs: '-Untitled-' and 'HeartBeat\_V2.X.produ...'. The 'File Information' tab is active, showing details for 'HeartBeat\_V2.X.production.hex' (351,836 bytes / 344 KiB). Below this is the 'Data Inspector (Little-endian)' section, which lists various data types and their values:

| Type                 | Unsigned (+)                | Signed (±) |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| 8-bit Integer        | 0                           | 0          |
| 16-bit Integer       | 8192                        | 8192       |
| 24-bit Integer       | 270336                      | 270336     |
| 32-bit Integer       | 270336                      | 270336     |
| 64-bit Integer (+)   | 270336                      |            |
| 64-bit Integer (±)   | 270336                      |            |
| 16-bit Float. P.     | 0.0078125                   |            |
| 32-bit Float. P.     | 3.7882142e-40               |            |
| 64-bit Float. P.     | 1.335637304341392e-318      |            |
| LEB128 (+)           | 0                           |            |
| LEB128 (±)           | 0                           |            |
| MS-DOS DateTime      | Invalid date                |            |
| OLE 2.0 DateTime     | 1899-12-30 00:00:00.000 UTC |            |
| UNIX 32-bit DateTime | 1870-01-04 03:05:36 UTC     |            |

- We can see the hex values from address 0x00000000. Scroll down and check which address the file data ends and starts filling with FF FF FF FF .....

The screenshot shows the hexed.it web application interface. The top navigation bar includes icons for New file, Open file, Save as, Undo, Redo, Tools, Settings, and Help. Below this, the 'File Information' section displays the file name 'HeartBeat\_V2.X.production.hex' and its size '351,836 bytes (344 KiB)'. The 'Data Inspector (Little-endian)' section shows a table of data types and their corresponding hex values. The table has three columns: Type, Unsigned (+), and Signed (±). The data starts at address 0000BD20 and ends at address 0000BDE0, where the hex value is FF FF FF FF. The address 0000BDE0 is highlighted in blue, indicating the end of the file data.

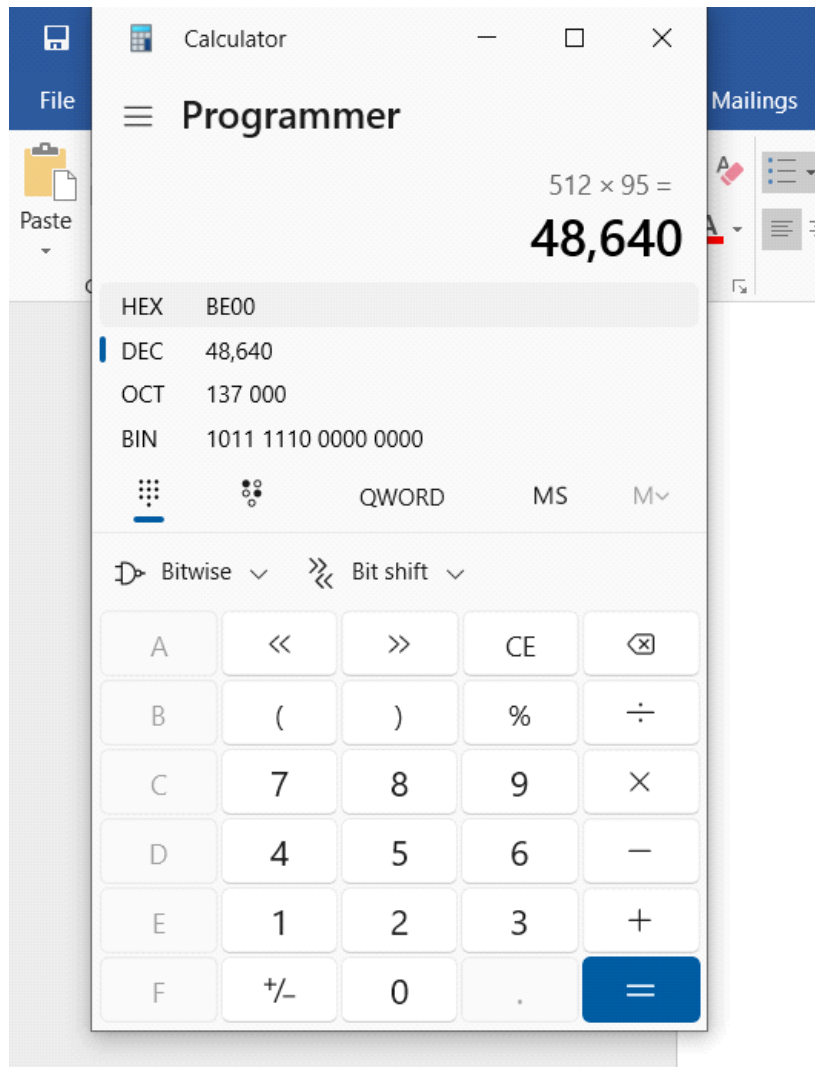
| Type               | Unsigned (+)         | Signed (±) |
|--------------------|----------------------|------------|
| 8-bit Integer      | 255                  | -1         |
| 16-bit Integer     | 65535                | -1         |
| 24-bit Integer     | 16777215             | -1         |
| 32-bit Integer     | 4294967295           | -1         |
| 64-bit Integer (+) | 18446744073709551615 |            |
| 64-bit Integer (±) | -1                   |            |
| 16-bit Float. P.   | Invalid number       |            |
| 32-bit Float. P.   | Invalid number       |            |
| 64-bit Float. P.   | Invalid number       |            |
| LEB128 (+)         | Invalid number       |            |
| LEB128 (±)         | Invalid number       |            |

- As shown above the file data ends at address location near BDE0 . Address BDE0 is a hex value . Open a calculator and select programmer mode and type the above HEX address value .

The screenshot shows the Windows Calculator application in Programmer mode. The 'HEX' tab is selected, and the value 'BDE0' is entered. The calculator displays the decimal equivalent '48,608' and the octal equivalent '136 740'. The binary equivalent '1011 1101 1110 0000' is also shown. The calculator interface includes a numeric keypad and various function buttons for bitwise operations and bit shifts.



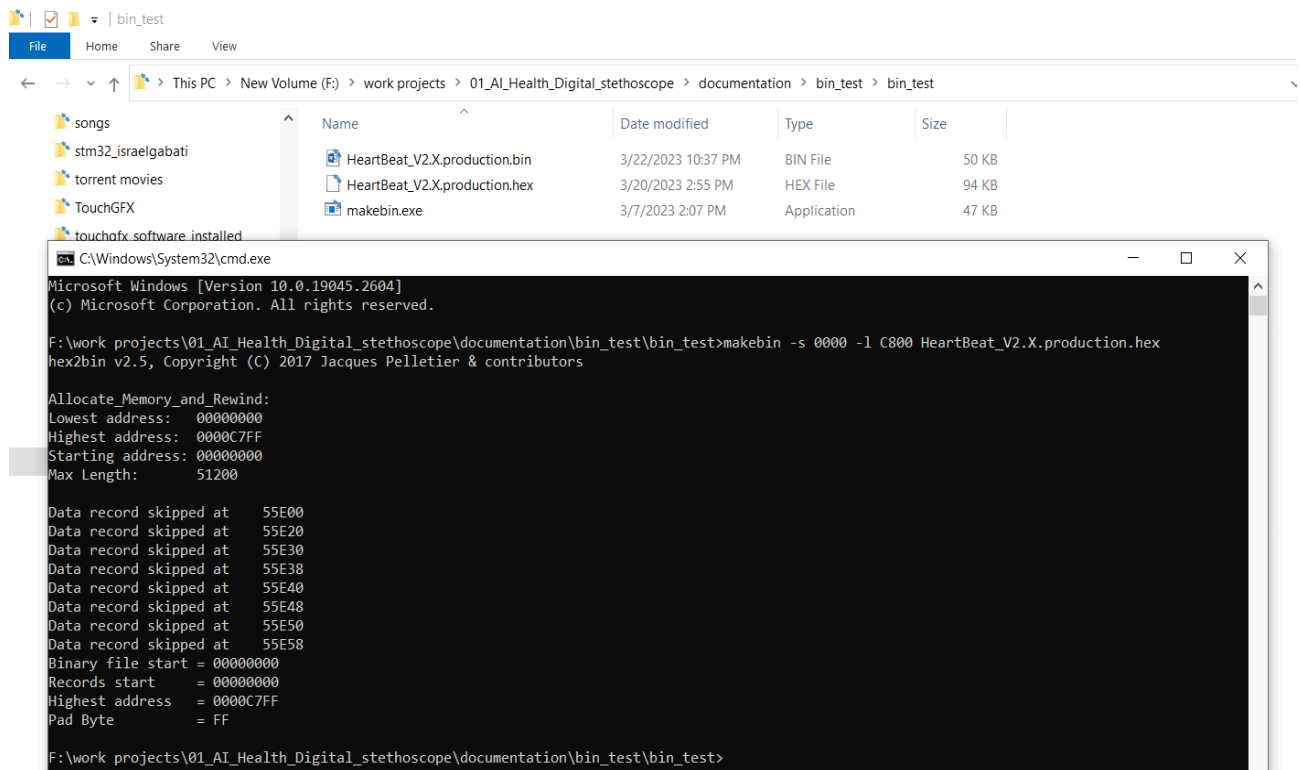
- Decimal equivalent of BDE0 is 48,608. Now divide 48,608 by 512 check if it is multiple with remainder 0. The value 48,608 is not multiple of 512 with quotient 94 ,remainder 480.
- So next multiple of 512 is 95 . Find  $512 * 95 = 48,640$  . the HEX equivalent of 48,640 is BE00.



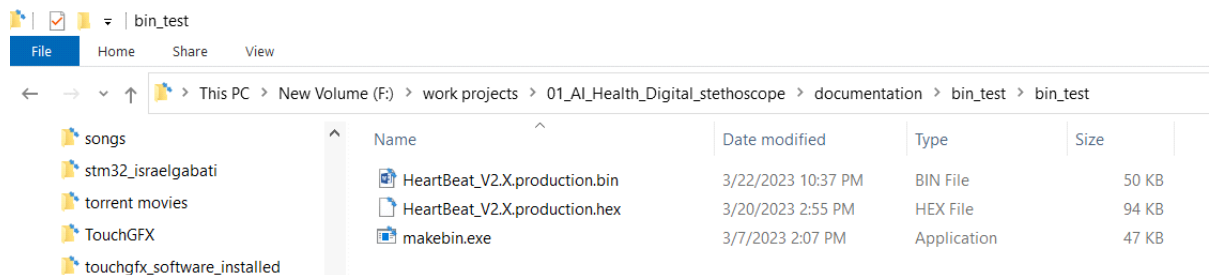
- Again open Command prompt and try **len** value as **BE00**.

**Example:** `makebin -s 0000 -l BE00 HeartBeat_V2.X.production.hex`

- Still we get data skip record at memory address before **55E00**.
- So continue increasing multiples of 512 and **hex equivalent** as **len** in command line CMD and check for **which hex value DATA SKIP RECORD stop before 55E00**.
- We have got hex value **C800** which is a multiple of 512 and also stops data skip record before 55E00. So for this HEX FILE the **len value is C800**



- As shown above data skip record stops and **bin file** with same name is created in that folder.

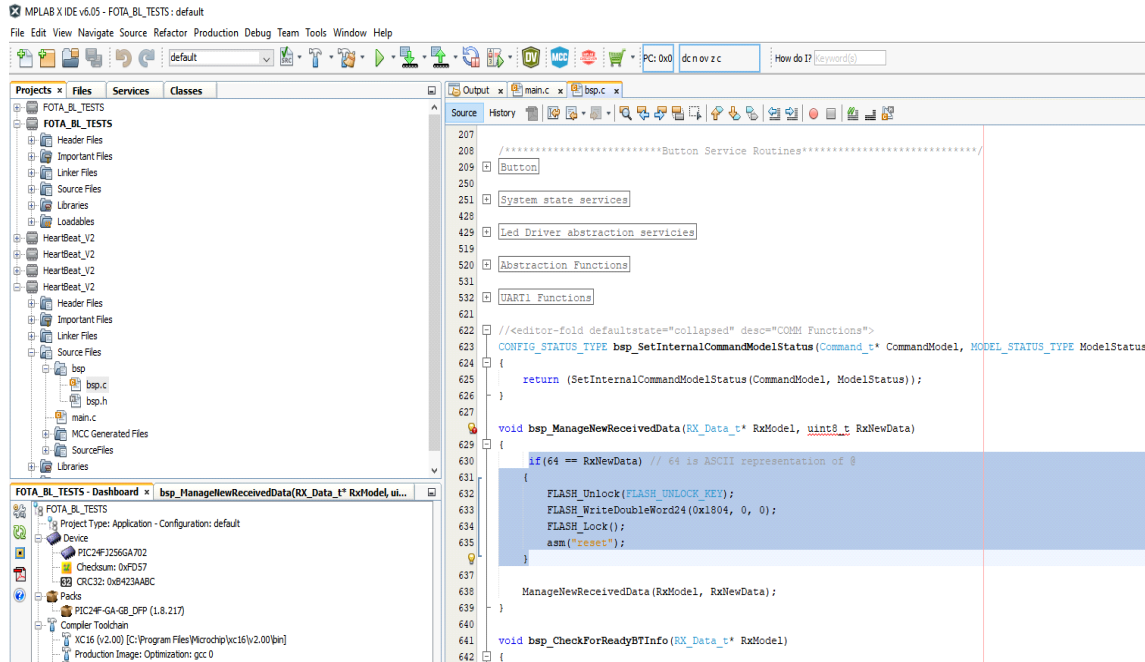


- The above **bin file** is passed to web server page and transferred through OTA process to PIC24F device.

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## NOTES:

- For updating user application firmware code through Phone app OTA , we use a **reset function** in our code , which will respond to **RESET API** from phone and trigger a software reset of MCU . No modifications needed further in reset function.



- we have made changes to **configuration settings** to user application firmware code by adding **flash files settings** to access flash memory . so no modifications needed further in configuration settings. Have to use this user application firmware code as **BASE file** for any further future update .
- For finding the **version number** for user application firmware and **version comparison** in phone app, we are **hardcoding** the **version number** in user code . we need to make **2 changes in code** to change the version number **before compiling hex file**. In **AtCommandsBT.c** file , near line **number 82** we use a command named **"VR\_10.1"** . Here 10.1 is the version number , we can make changes to version number in format like **"VR\_01.1"** , **"VR\_02.3"** , **"VR\_12.2"** , **"VR\_34.5"** , **"VR\_99.6"** ..... The command uses a **length of 7** , which should be defined in **AtCommandBT.h** file near line **number 84** as **#define VERSION\_NAME\_Command\_Lenght 7** . refer pics below.

MPLAB X IDE v6.05 - FOTA\_BL\_TESTS : default

File Edit View Navigate Source Refactor Production Debug Team Tools Window Help

default

PC: 0x0 dc n ov z c

How do I?

Projects x Files Services Classes

FOTA\_BL\_TESTS

- FOTA\_BL\_TESTS
  - Header Files
  - Important Files
  - Linker Files
  - Source Files
  - Libraries
  - Loadables
  - HeartBeat\_V2
  - HeartBeat\_V2
  - HeartBeat\_V2
  - HeartBeat\_V2
  - Header Files
  - Important Files
  - Linker Files
  - Source Files
  - bsp
  - main.c
  - MCC Generated Files
  - SourceFiles
  - AtCommandBT.c
  - AtCommandBT.h
  - Commands.txt

Source History

```
73 "AT 13 AT+IPHONEACCEV=1,1,0",
74 "AT 13 AT+IPHONEACCEV=1,1,1",
75 "AT 13 AT+IPHONEACCEV=1,1,2",
76 "AT 13 AT+IPHONEACCEV=1,1,3",
77 "AT 13 AT+IPHONEACCEV=1,1,4",
78 "AT 13 AT+IPHONEACCEV=1,1,5",
79 "AT 13 AT+IPHONEACCEV=1,1,6",
80 "AT 13 AT+IPHONEACCEV=1,1,7",
81 "AT 13 AT+IPHONEACCEV=1,1,8",
82 "AT 13 AT+IPHONEACCEV=1,1,9",
83 "VR 10.1"
84 "ENABLE_BATT_IND=ON",
85 " ",
86 "\r\n",
87 "?",
88 };
89 Battery_Status_Response_Struct Battery_Status_Response = {
90 "FAST_CHARGE",
91 "NO_POWER",
92 "DISABLED",
93 "STANDBY",
94 "TRICKLE_CHARGE",
```

FOTA BL TESTS - Dashboard x AT COMMANDS RC127 - Navigator

MPLAB X IDE v6.05 - FOTA\_BL\_TESTS : default

File Edit View Navigate Source Refactor Production Debug Team Tools Window Help

default

PC: 0x0 dc n ov z c

How do I?

Projects x Files Services Classes

FOTA\_BL\_TESTS

- FOTA\_BL\_TESTS
  - Header Files
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  - Header Files
  - Important Files
  - Linker Files
  - Source Files
  - bsp
  - main.c
  - MCC Generated Files
  - SourceFiles
  - AtCommandBT.c
  - AtCommandBT.h
  - Commands.txt

Source History

```
73 #define HFP_CONFIG_Length 32 //OFF= 33 ,
74 #define BATTERY_INDICATOR_0_Command_Length 26
75 #define BATTERY_INDICATOR_1_Command_Length 26
76 #define BATTERY_INDICATOR_2_Command_Length 26
77 #define BATTERY_INDICATOR_3_Command_Length 26
78 #define BATTERY_INDICATOR_4_Command_Length 26
79 #define BATTERY_INDICATOR_5_Command_Length 26
80 #define BATTERY_INDICATOR_6_Command_Length 26
81 #define BATTERY_INDICATOR_7_Command_Length 26
82 #define BATTERY_INDICATOR_8_Command_Length 26
83 #define BATTERY_INDICATOR_9_Command_Length 26
84 #define VERSION_NAME_Command_Length 7
85 #define ENABLE_BATT_IND_ON_Length 18
86 #define Space_Command_Length 1
87 #define END_Command_Length 2
88 #define RETURN_Command_Length 1
89
90
91 #define Fast_Charge_Response_Length 11
92 #define No_Power_Response_Length 8
93 #define Disabled_Response_Length 8
94 #define Stanby_Response_Length 7
95 #define Trickle_Response_Length 14
96 #define Chrg_in_Progress_Response_Length 18
97 #define Chrg_Complete_Response_Length 15
```

FOTA\_BL\_TESTS - Dashboard x VERSION\_NAME\_Command\_Length - Navigator

FOTA\_BL\_TESTS

Project Type: Application - Configuration: default