



BANGLADESH

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Statement

By

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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Third Committee of the 60th Session
of the United Nations General Assembly
on

Agenda item 64: Advancement of Women

Agenda item 65: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

New York
13 October 2005

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Mr. Chairman,

May I begin by expressing my delegation's warm felicitation to you and the bureau, for your excellent stewardship of the work of the Committee. We are confident that under your able guidance our deliberations will come to fruition.

The UN Charter enshrines equal rights of men and women. We, in Bangladesh, remain fully committed to this principle. Four world conferences on women and many more follow-up events greatly helped to advance the women issues. Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is a significant milestone. The review and appraisal of Beijing +10 in March this year is another step ahead. It has become critically important to integrate gender perspective in the new visions of development, particularly the MDGs. UN, in our opinion, has the key role to play - as identifier, collator and transmitter of best practices throughout the wider international community.

Mr. Chairman,

We commend the Secretariat for the reports in hand. Appreciation is owed to the Assistant Secretary General, Ms. Rachel Mayanja, for her valuable introduction to the Secretary General's report. We laud all the relevant UN bodies for their role in integrating a gender perspective in the UN system. Though many gaps and challenges remain, the continued process must be supported in order to achieving our ultimate goal.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by Jamaica on behalf of Group of 77 and China. I would, therefore, limit myself to comments on some key issues that Bangladesh as a developing country considers significant.

Mr. Chairman,

Advancement of Women is a key component of Bangladesh's major policy thrusts. Our constitution has guaranteed equal rights for men and women. We also have constitutional provisions to adopt special measures in favour of the advancement of women and children.

Bangladesh remains fully committed to the implementation of the Beijing objectives. Immediately following Beijing, a National Plan of Action was drawn up in line with the Declaration. It focused, among other things, on active collaboration with NGOs and human rights groups. We set up a separate Ministry solely devoted to the advancement of women and children. Our National Council for Women's Development is headed by Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, herself, and comprises of a cross section of efficient public and private individuals.

Majority of the world's absolute poor are women. No development goal is really achievable without mainstreaming gender and empowering women. Poverty eradication is thus intertwined with gender justice. Equal access to credit and opportunities for men and women is essential to eliminate the scourge of poverty. The present Government in Bangladesh, under the leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, has prioritized development of women and reducing the gender gap. To this end, gender dimension has been sufficiently reflected in Bangladesh's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Our budget is 'gender-sensitive'. It has the largest percentage allocated to education, particularly to expand women education.

Education is free for women upto 12th grade. On our achieving MDG 3, World Bank has termed Bangladesh as the pioneer in the South Asia in narrowing gender disparities at the primary and secondary levels. We have substantially reduced child mortality and improved maternal health.

Innovative ideas like micro-credit and non-formal education has been coupled with active governmental support to empower women in Bangladesh. More than 12 million women are now self-reliant through the successful use of micro-credit. Over 1.8 million women are employed in the garment industry. Our women are now empowered enough to play the role of a major catalyst for development.

We are adopting appropriate legislations at national level to protect women from violence. Some examples are: the Suppression of Violence Against Women and Children Act 2000 which was amended in 2003, Acid Crimes Control Act 2002 and Speedy Trial Tribunal Act 2002. We also have One stop Crisis Centers and Safe Custody Homes for Women, Children and Adolescents to protect them from sexual abuse and harassments.

The economic empowerment has also led our women to political empowerment. We have over 13,000 elected women representatives in local Government. Women are contesting to be directly elected to the National Parliament apart from having 45 reserved seats. Bangladesh is a unique example where both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have been women since more than fourteen years.

Mr. Chairman,

At the international level, Bangladesh has always been in the forefront of all debates on the rights and empowerment of women. Bangladesh is a State Party to almost all the major international instruments. These include CEDAW and Optional Protocol thereto, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, International Convention for the Suppression of the Trafficking in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution and signatory to the Convention on Violence against Women Migrant Workers and also SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution. Bangladesh is one of the main sponsors of the Security Council Resolution 1325.

Mr. Chairman,

Our shared goals can only be achieved through partnerships across the broadest possible spectrum. Clear and visible linkages should be established between the MDGs and the national priorities in implementing Beijing objectives as well as the CEDAW. Assistance to build capacity of those who are resource-strapped should be rendered. Commitments that have been made, and resolutions adopted need to be fully implemented. It is part of our commitment to humankind. I assure you, Mr. Chairman, that Bangladesh delegation will continue to play its due role for this noble cause.

I thank you.