



# BANGLADESH

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**Statement by H.E. Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Ambassador & Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations at the Third Committee of the 60th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on agenda item 71 (b) (c) and (e): Human rights questions, New York, 31 October 2005**

Mr. Chairman,

There is a prevalent agreement that the questions of human rights should be addressed through an integrated and holistic approach. Civil and political rights as well as economic, cultural, and social rights, including the right to development are, in our view, of equal importance. These rights are interrelated. They are mutually supportive. We believe these rights to be essentially linked to the practice of democracy, to the respect for the rule of law, to the pursuit of justice and peace, and to the realization of the right to development.

The United Nations during six decades of its existence has been playing the role of catalyst to promote human rights across the globe. It has been instrumental in the process of codifying the legal rights for the humankind since its founding conference in San Francisco. The adoption of the UDHR was the most significant milestone. It has been followed since by many more conventions.

I thank the Secretary-General for his reports. I also thank Madame Louise Arbour, High Commissioner for Human Rights, for her report as well as her lucid presentation at the Committee. Our appreciation also goes to the Special Representatives, Independent Experts and Special Rapporteurs on human rights issues for their presentations.

Bangladesh, Mr. Chairman, is committed to building a society free from exploitation in which the fundamental human rights and freedom, equality and justice, political, economic and social rights, are secure. All citizens are equal before law in my country. The Constitution embodies the principles and provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the Fundamental Rights for all its citizens. This is irrespective of religion, race, caste or sex. It has not only guaranteed equal rights for men and women but also provided special measures in favour of women, and other backward sections of citizens for their advancement.

In Bangladesh, we have, through legislations, ensured freedom of speech and expression, freedom of the press, and freedom of thought and conscience. Every citizen enjoys the right to religion, education, association, occupation, trade and so on.

In international fora, particularly in the UN Bangladesh plays a constructive role. She is a State Party to all major international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

(CEDAW), International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of Crime of Apartheid, Convention for the Suppression of the Trafficking in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, Slavery Convention of 1926 and subsequent protocols.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government remains committed to the fulfillment of its obligations under these human rights instruments. It has undertaken all possible measures for their effective and timely implementation. These include inter alia, creating national machinery, formulating new policies and programmes, legislating new laws, updating and amending existing ones, etc.

Bangladesh has also ratified International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide; Convention on the Political Rights of Women; Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for and Registration of Marriage; Convention Against Torture and other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; and Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

Mr. Chairman,

We have appropriate legislative measures to promote the rights of children and women, focusing mainly on their protection from violence, abuse, and discrimination. The Government has accorded the highest priority to empowerment of women. A National Advisory Committee has been established to combat trafficking. Stringent laws have been enacted to protect the women and children, in particular girls, from being trafficked and abused. At the regional level, the Government has ratified the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution in 2002.

We have established an Independent Anti-Corruption Commission, which would conduct investigation and prosecution for the offences of corruption. Necessary measures are underway to set-up an independent National Human Rights Commission and the establishment of the Office of Ombudsman. The separation of the Judiciary from the Executive is also under process.

In the spirit of our adherence to the democratic principles and values, we supported the establishment of the 'democracy fund' at the UN. We believe that the Fund would help propagate such values around the world.

My delegation supports the current reform exercise of the United Nations. We need to strengthen the United Nations human rights machinery including through providing technical assistance and support to the national human rights institutions. The initiative to establish a Human Rights Council replacing the existing Commission on Human Rights, we hope, would be a major step forward. We have actively supported this measure.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh's constraints are many and varied. But we take pride in our democratic and pluralistic institutions, in our culture of tolerance and in our history of pursuit for freedom and justice. This spirit enables us to face the myriad challenges today of realizing in full for our people the fundamental values we share with freedom-loving peoples everywhere.