



BANGLADESH

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Statement

By

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**Hon'ble Chairman
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs**

**Government of the People's
Republic of Bangladesh**

at the

Third Committee of the 60th Session
of the UN General Assembly

on

Agenda item 67: Promotion and
Protection of the Rights of Children

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Mr. Chairman,

Children are the most precious and valuable assets of any nation. They are not only our future but also our present. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has provided a comprehensive legal framework to protect and promote their rights. Despite its universal ratification, the global situation with regard to children remains mixed. There has been progress in many parts of the world. Still they continue to be most vulnerable. They are victims of poverty, armed conflicts, and trafficking. Other challenges, for instance, hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, disability, HIV/AIDS and so on continue to exist. The UNGA Special Session on Children was a significant step towards the realization of the commitments in a set of time-bound goals.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation likes to place on record our appreciation to the Secretary General for his reports. We also thank the Special Representative and the Independent Expert for their reports respectively on Children in Armed Conflicts and Violence Against Children.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh is a State Party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. The Government, under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, is committed to the overall development and welfare of children.

A separate Ministry is solely devoted to the welfare of women and children. The Government has already implemented two National Plans of Action. The Third National Plan of Action for the period 2004 to 2009 has been focused on five specific areas. These are Food and Nutrition; Health; Education and Empowerment of the girl child; Protection from abuse, exploitation and violence; and Physical Environment. A ten-member Parliamentary Standing Committee has been formed to supervise the women and children affairs. An Inter-Ministerial Committee coordinates the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the national level. The decade 2001 to 2010 has been declared as the Decade of the Rights of the Child in Bangladesh. We celebrate 30 September as the 'Girl Child Day'.

Mr. Chairman,

The government accords the highest priority to the programme such as 'Education for All' particularly for the girls. It has introduced stipend programmes for the students at primary and secondary levels. The main focus of the programmes is to increase enrollment and prevent dropouts. Tuition fees are waived for girls up to the 12th grade and periodic bonus payments are made for specific improvements. A massive campaign for girl's education with a focus on the value of the girl child is underway.

We have already achieved MDG 3 target component of gender parity in primary and secondary schools. In the developing world, we have the highest primary school enrolment rates, which is more than 97% prompting the World Bank to term Bangladesh as the pioneer in South Asia with regard to this effort. Innovative ideas in areas of informal education, including the 'Food for Education' and 'Cash for Education' as well as the micro-credit programmes have also facilitated the well-being of the children, particularly the girl child. Human Development Report 2005, has referred to these successes as the demonstration of what can be achieved through stronger state action and civic activism.

Substantive progress has been made in reducing child mortality and malnutrition through the extended immunization programme. There are declines in iodine deficiency disorders. Vitamin 'A' supplementation and Oral rehydration therapy has saved millions of child lives. Special programmes have been undertaken for children with disabilities. The Government in collaboration with the UNICEF, has undertaken 'Early Childhood Development Project' (2001-2005) with an objective to create a safe, secure and enabling environment for the development of children.

Programmes are also underway with regard to abandoned and street children. The Ministry of Social Welfare, with the assistance of UNDP, has undertaken a project entitled "Appropriate Resources for Improvement of Street Children's Environment" (ARISE) in full compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The child labour laws have been strictly enforced with the active support from the ILO and the UNICEF in garment industries. Attempts are also being made to eliminate child labour in informal sectors through non-formal education.

Bangladesh figures among the low prevalence countries affected by HIV/AIDS. However, as a precautionary measure, we have adopted a National Policy on HIV/AIDS. We have particular focus on children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS and an all-party Parliamentary Committee to monitor the situation in the country.

Mr. Chairman,

We are a state party to International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others. Elimination of trafficking in persons, especially in children, has been accorded particular priority. A National Advisory Committee has been established to combat trafficking. Stringent legislative acts have been enacted to protect women and children, in particular girls, from all forms of abuse, exploitation, violence and discrimination. These include the Suppression of Immoral Trafficking Act of 1993, 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. 'One stop Crisis Centers' and 'Safe Custody Homes' have been initiated for Women, Children and Adolescents to protect them from sexual abuse and harassments. The National Plan of Action against the Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children including Trafficking was adopted in 2002. Several projects have been undertaken to stop trafficking and prostitution of girls.

At the regional level, we are a part of the Kathmandu understanding on children. We have ratified the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution. Bangladesh is a signatory to the SAARC Convention on South Asian Regional Arrangements for Promotion of Child Welfare.

Mr. Chairman,

Globally, we must further focus on the situation of children affected by armed conflict. Also, on the suffering of children under foreign occupation.

Bangladesh is actively represented in the Committee of the Rights of the Child. My delegation deeply values the support of the member states in CRC election held earlier this year.

At the UN, Bangladesh has been, for some years, the main sponsor of the resolution on "The International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World". I am pleased to say that we have already received overwhelming assurances of support for it.

Mr. Chairman,

All of us at the UN need to work together to create a non-violent and secure environment for our children. To this end, mobilizing adequate international resources to supplement national efforts is imperative. Our Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, herself, has kindled new hopes for our children particularly the girl child. Her unflinching commitments and care for children have made a profound impact. We need to sustain this momentum to contribute to our ultimate objective - 'A World Fit for Children'.

I thank you.