



BANGLADESH

Please check against delivery

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 61: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit on Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

Agenda item 62: Social Development including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Agenda item 63: Follow up of the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing

New York
04 October 2005

PERMANENT MISSION OF BANGLADESH TO THE UNITED NATIONS
227 East 45th Street, 14th Floor, New York, NY 10017
E-mail: bangladesh@un.int, web site: www.un.int/bangladesh
Tel (212) 867-3434 • Fax (212) 972-4038

Mr. Chairman,

Could I begin by congratulating you, Ambassador Butagira, my close friend, and your bureau, upon your well-deserved election. Also upon your excellent stewardship of the Committee's work. I am certain that under your able guidance our deliberations will come to fruition. I assure you my delegation's fullest support and to other members of the bureau.

Mr. Chairman,

Last month, our leaders gathered in the historic Summit; reviewed the MDGs; and reiterated their determination to ensure the timely and full realization of the agreed development goals. Early this year, we celebrated the 10th year of the World Summit on the Social Development and the 5th year of the outcome of the 24th special session of the General Assembly at the 43rd Session of the Commission for Social Development. All these significant events of this year have given us a new impetus to realize the globally shared social goals.

The Secretary General deserves appreciation for his reports on the items before us. I thank the Under Secretary General, Mr. José Antonio Ocampo, and Assistant Secretary General, Mr. Sundaram, for their useful remarks.

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

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh remains deeply committed to making progress in all spheres of social development in line with the Copenhagen Commitments and MDGs. By adhering to the values of pluralism, democracy, good governance, human rights, gender justice and women's empowerment we have brought significant societal transformation, a "silent revolution", in Bangladesh.

We have already achieved the 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%. The incidence of poverty fell from over 70 percent poor in 1971 to less than 42 percent in 2004. We have substantially reduced child mortality and improved maternal health. Our women are now empowered enough to play the role of a major catalyst for development. Micro-credit programmes have reached over 12 million people, mostly women. The Human Development Report 2005, which has placed Bangladesh in the Medium Human Development Index, refers to these successes as the demonstration of what can be achieved through stronger state action and civic activism.

We have been advocating for quite sometimes that UN can play a significant role as an identifier and collator of best practices so that these could be translated and transmitted throughout the wider international community.

(Family) Mr. Chairman,

Any societal transformation begins with the family. Poverty is identified as one of the main hindrances to the attainment of familial goals. There are about 800 million poor people around the world who live on one dollar or less a day. Our region, i.e. South Asia, alone, is the home of 500 million poor. The global poverty situation will not improve unless we take their plights into account. Concerted efforts are extremely urgent to end the tyranny of poverty prevailing in the families of South Asia, including my own country.

(Disabled Persons) Mr. Chairman,

My delegation is pleased to note that the 'Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities' has made significant progress in drafting the Convention in its sixth session in August this year. We are looking forward to its early adoption. However, the developing countries will be in urgent need of technical and financial support for their preparedness to become party to the Convention. A broad-based approach in international cooperation is absolutely essential.

Bangladesh has adopted a National Policy for the development of the persons with disabilities and a National Work Plan under a taskforce for the implementation of the policy. Some pragmatic steps taken by the Government are reservation of quota in government service at all levels, monthly allowance, interest free micro-credit, integrated education programme for the visually impaired, institution for mentally retarded children and a training center for the physically handicapped. A Disability Welfare Act has been enacted in the year 2001. A Special Foundation for the Welfare of the disabled has also been established. Raising awareness to remove social stigma is underway.

(Aged Persons) Mr. Chairman,

Ageing remains a problem both for the developed and the developing countries. The implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action requires sustained action at all levels, both national and international. In order to stimulate efforts for international cooperation, we emphasize on capacity building. We also need to mainstream the cause of the ageing population into national development agendas.

In Bangladesh, we have roughly 5 million older persons who are above 60. The Government has introduced targeted programmes for the aged population in line with Madrid commitments. These include the Old Age Allowances Programme, and allowances for widows, distressed and deserted women; homes for the abandoned, dispossessed and disabled aged.

(Youth) Mr. Chairman,

The Secretary General's 'World Youth Report 2005' has noted that South Asia has the largest number of youth living below the two poverty lines, followed by sub-Saharan Africa. Mainstreaming the youth in the process of the poverty eradication is a complex challenge that requires our continuous attention and concerted action.

In Bangladesh, we have roughly 45 million youth population. The Government has adopted National Youth Policy in line with our commitment to the World Programme of Action for the Youth. We have undertaken programmes such as skill development training, self-employment programme, micro-financing, awareness programme of youth on population and health care, youth involvement in community development, etc.

Mr. Chairman,

Today, we are at a crossroads of social development. We have the commitments made at the World Summits to fulfill and the Plans of Action to execute. We cannot fail in our endeavours to realize our universally acknowledged social goals. We must work together to make the world a better place for the present generations and for those that follow. I thank you, Mr. Chairman.