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BANGLADESH

STATEMENT

BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT

THE OPEN DEBATE OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

ON

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

NEW YORK

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Mr. President,

It has been five years since the adoption of 1325, a resolution that Bangladesh, then sitting in the Council was so closely associated with. I wish to begin by thanking you for allowing us the opportunity of taking stock of the progress on it since then. Also, by praising Romania for the excellent conduct of the Council's presidency during the current month.

Mr. President,

Conflicts in the past were largely inter-State or inter-Empire. More recently, they have been intra-State with sub-regional and regional ramifications. In many ways more than in the past, civilians form the bulk of the victim population. Two millennia ago the Greek sage Aristotle had wisely observed that all wars were waged for the sake of getting money. Not much has changed since then. But our power of analysis has grown over time, and we now observe more keenly perhaps, that poverty, struggle for scarce resources, and socio-economic injustices lie at the heart of conflicts. And all of them, sadly, entail grave violations of human rights.

It does not take much scrutiny to come to the conclusion that the segment of the civilian population most vulnerable are women and children. This is evident everywhere. Women and girls are often viewed as bearers of cultural identities. Thus they become prime targets. When women suffer, so do children. Also children are rendered instruments for perpetration of violence as well, as this can be done easily and cheaply. The current hot-spots of the world are replete with such examples.

Women know the price they, and their children, have to pay in conflict situations. It is natural, therefore, that they are keen, and often better equipped to prevent and resolve those. They have sought to do so over generations, as peace educators both in families and wider societies, fostering a culture of peace within communities, and across them. They often, therefore, aptly serve as bridge-builders of understandings across rivers of strife.

It is in this perspective that Bangladesh, as a member of the Security Council, worked closely in the adoption of 1325(2000). The resolution was primarily based on a simple thesis. It was that equal access and full participation of women in all layers of power structure as well as their full participation in prevention and resolution of conflicts were essential elements for making and sustaining peace. The Bangladesh presidency issued a statement to this effect on International Women's Day in March 2000. Eventually it culminated in the resolution. Needless to say, Bangladesh remains committed to its full implementation.

Drawing from our domestic experience, we believe that gender mainstreaming and empowerment are critical factors for development. Access to education and health, coupled with the provision of micro-credit facilities can unleash the entrepreneurial skills

of individuals. We know such empowerment of women helps stave off extremist thought and action. This includes the scourge of terrorism. Today, by adhering to these very values, Bangladesh herself is undergoing a quiet but significant societal transformation. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and her government have an unflinching commitment to these goals. The UN should work as a conduit for disseminating homegrown ideas and best practices like micro-credit and non-formal education that have proven to work in my country and many others to societies of comparable milieu. These ideas can be applied in the post-conflict societies with major involvement of women. These will form the bulwark of peacebuilding.

Success in implementing the resolution, in our view, has been mixed. While we have integrated gender perspective in some aspects of UN peacekeeping operations and also in some post-conflict peace-building efforts, much work remains to be done. We encourage the DPKO to continue its efforts in this direction. The excellent presentation this morning by USG Jean Marie Guéhenno, indeed his leadership qualities as well, give us the confidence that the desired results will come to fruition. Bangladesh, as one of the consistently top troop contributing country to UN peacekeeping operations, remains conscious of her responsibilities to incorporate essential elements of resolution 1325 in the pre-deployment training of its peacekeepers.

Non-participation or insignificant participation of women in peace agreement negotiations are, still a problem. These peace agreements inevitably fail to address the special needs of women. Although women suffer most as victims of conflict, they are excluded from peace dividends. Our endeavours to resolve these conflicts and address their root causes will fail if we do not empower women. Formal participation of women in peace negotiations and decision-making processes is key to the effectiveness of conflict prevention.

The 2005 World Summit has outlined several policy frameworks important to millions of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations. Operationalization of the Peacebuilding Commission by the year-end would be a giant step in this direction. Increased focus on conflict prevention; responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity; effective promotion and protection of human rights; and enhanced rule of law are some of the achievements of the Summit that would go a long way towards empowering women in the longer term. Also in enhancing women's role in conflict prevention and resolution.

We welcome the proposed system-wide action plan on implementation of the Security Council Resolution 1325. It is our hope that it would be instrumental in integrating gender perspective across the entire UN system. Such gender mainstreaming off course must take into account geographical, ethnic and cultural factors. To become successful, the action plan would require necessary resources, financial, material and human. This would have to be at all levels. Active participation of the civil society is a sine qua non.

Every generation, Mr. President, must seek to bequeath to the next a better world. Ours must also do the same. For this purpose we must identify some ideals, and seek to achieve them. It is such pursuits that lend vigour to our societies and create the positive ferment that is the 'primum movens' of civilizations. Also, it helps us achieve greater heights across a broader spectrum of human endeavour.

I thank you Mr. President.