Statement by
H.E. Dr. A.K. Abdul Momen, Ambassador and the Permanent Representative
of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh at the Plenary Debate
on the agenda item 15 ‘Culture of Peace’ of the 66th Session of the UNGA

New York, December 12, 2011

Mr. President,

It is my privilege to introduce the resolution entitled ‘Follow up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace’ contained in document A/66/L.23 dated 05 December 2011 at this year’s Plenary on behalf of the co-sponsors. Since the tabling of the resolution, apart from my own country, the following countries have joined the list of co-sponsors: Afghanistan, Bahamas, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Belarus, Cameroon, China, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Guatemala, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Peru, Philippines, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Turkmenistan, Togo and Vietnam. Since 2001, this resolution has been tabled and adopted every year with consensus. This shows the commitment of the entire world community to make the world safe for our future generation. Here, let me quote from the Statement of our Prime Minister delivered in this year’s United Nation’s General Debate: “I believe peace is the basis for development. I also believe peace prevails when justice prevails. Thus, justice for peace found its place in my government’s domestic and foreign policy contributing to strengthening Bangladesh’s secular, democratic and progressive ideals. I also seek your support for Bangladesh’s annual flagship resolution, “A Culture of Peace,” which I launched in 2000 when I was Prime Minister for the first time.”

Mr. President,

The culture of peace is a set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that rejects violence and prevents conflicts through dialogue among individuals, groups and nations. We believe that all conflicts, intolerance, war and misunderstandings emanates from a mindset that is not enriched with freer values of life and tolerance, respect and a sense of diversity. We firmly believe that a world order that is informed by a culture of peace is conducive to the attainment of our development goals, including the MDGs. We see great value in the principles of tolerance, respect for diversity, democracy and understanding. These ideals were endorsed by the Member States in the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace in 1999. Bangladesh had privilege to steer the process. We believe that it is important to
continue dialogue and mediation among civilizations and create a mindset and an environment of tolerance, respect for diversity and cultural values as most conflicts and wars begin at heart.

One year elapsed since we ended the International Decade for a Culture of Peace in 2010. I believe that the 10-year long exercise has had some impact on our psyche to make a peaceful world for all especially for our future – the children. Now we should put up efforts to transform our mindset to build a peaceful world.

I believe in the days ahead we should continue our endeavors focusing on implementation. The Programme of Actions enjoys universal support. I sincerely believe that this resolution will advance Culture of Peace in eight areas of cooperation. One of these areas that we need to stress upon is to raise public awareness and disseminate public information on Culture of Peace. UN Department of Public Information (DPI) should take special information strategy on promotion of Culture of Peace (COP). For that we believe the DPI may create enhanced awareness on Culture of peace within their existing resources. This could be made possible when the representatives of DPI briefly touch upon the concepts of COP in their deliberations in different fora. At national level, respective governments may go ahead with this by active cooperation with both print and electronic media in collaboration with respective Ministries.

Proper coordination among various agencies of the UN is vital. We call upon the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization and Peace Building Commission to reflect relevant Programme of Actions at country level.

We wish to express our profound gratitude to all the stakeholders who have contributed and are contributing to the promotion of a culture of peace. We specially thank UNESCO, the lead agency which has carried out programs to promote the idea worldwide. Our sincere thanks go to the NGOs and civil societies who take the idea of a culture of peace around the world. In this pursuit, academics and media also have an important role to play. We need to involve youth in the process and the children as well – we may first listen to them and then take measures accordingly for the betterment of their lives.

Mr. President,

There has been no major change in this year’s draft resolution on ‘Follow up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace’. We added one new PP and one new OP. Apart from these, we also modified two OPs. In new PP 16, we welcomed the adoption of a Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence by the 36th session of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization General Conference. The new OP 3 invited the entities of the UN system, within their existing mandates, to integrate, as appropriate, the action areas of the
Programme of Action in their programmes of activities focusing on promoting a culture of peace and non-violence, in national as well as regional and international levels.

Out of the two modified OPs, one is OP12. The OP12, modifying the text of previous OP11, stressed the role of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in mobilizing all relevant stakeholders within and outside the United Nations system in support of cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and a culture of peace and invited UNESCO to continue to enhance communication and outreach, including through the culture of peace website, to promote the objectives of the newly adopted Program of Action at the national, regional and global levels. The second and the last amended OP is OP 14. Merging the texts of previous OP 13 and OP14, the modified OP14 invited the Secretary-General, within existing resources, in consultation with the Member States and taking into account the observations of the civil society organizations, to explore mechanisms and strategies for the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, and to initiate outreach efforts aimed at increasing global awareness of the Programme of Action and its eight areas of action aimed at their implementation.

Mr. President,

Immediately after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, our Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman pursued the policy of “Friendship towards all, malice towards none” in the conduct of the country’s international relations. This principle has always guided us in tuning our relations with the countries all around the globe, especially with the neighbors. Our peacekeepers are assisting the UN Peacekeeping operations even at the cost of their lives in different parts of the world in difficult terrains basically in the pursuit of peace. They also carry in their hearts the idea of ‘culture of peace’ and they put the idea into action as well. As a member of the Peacebuilding Commission of the UN we are discharging our responsibilities. We believe that a culture of peace holds the key to sustainable peace in post-conflict societies. Even in the societies which are in peace or in apparent peace, we have to nurture this idea so that no one can think about the violation of peace.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to extend our profound gratitude to all the Member States who have shown their solidarity by co-sponsoring the annual resolution during the last eleven years. Let me also express our thanks to all the Member States who have shown their positive gesture in supporting this resolution. The fact that this resolution has been adopted by consensus in each successive year has been a matter of great encouragement to the delegation of Bangladesh to the UN General Assembly.

In view of time constraint, the current draft resolution could not enjoy the endorsement of more co-sponsors. May I request my distinguished colleagues from other missions to co-sponsor the resolution by providing their valuable endorsement to it now?
I thank you, Mr. President.