



BANGLADESH

Statement by

H.E. Dr. A K Abdul Mannan

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations

at the at the 54th session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Agenda item 3 (Follow-up to the 4th World Conference on Women and its 20 special sessions of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century")

New York, 05 March 2010

Mr. Chairman

My delegation joins in itself with the statement made by women on behalf of C-77 and China. My intervention will, however, flag some of the issues that we consider important for our national perspectives.

Mr. Chairman,

Advancement of women is one of the major policy priorities of the government of Bangladesh. Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in fact, Bangladesh has always been in the forefront of mainstreaming, gender equality and women empowerment in country with its international relations including that of the United Nations. We are the 22nd Special Session of the General Assembly the Millennium Summit. Bangladesh became a State Party to CEDAW in 1984 and its optional protocol in 2000. We abide by the reporting obligations.

Immediately following the Beijing conference, Bangladesh government formulated the national plan for Women Advancement in 1997. In 1998, a National Plan of Action was approved by parliament, in line with the Beijing declaration. To monitor the implementation, a Women's Development Implementation Committee was formed headed by the Minister for Women and Child Affairs.

Mr. Chairman,

- As we focused heavily in female education, we already achieved MDG-3 target in primary and secondary education. We wanted the ratio of girls to boys up to 121 gender. To promote gender equality, we have reduced school fees as well.
- Infant Mortality rate has reduced to 22 per 1000 for the first time in Bangladesh.
- Poverty eradication and women empowerment are highly prioritized in our constitution and integral feature of our development planning. We have already introduced Gender Responsive Budget and have taken initiatives in institutionalizing gender-responsive budgeting. Gender equality is also reflected in Bangladesh's poverty reduction strategy paper.
- In the last national election in 2008, 20% more women voted in the election and in the Bangladesh National Parliament there are now 22 women members or 10% of the total.
- Presently, we have prominent representation in various positions. From ex-ombudsman, Prime Minister's adviser to the Opposition, Deputy leader of the House, important ministers such as Defense Minister, Power & Energy Minister, Foreign Minister, Home Minister, Agriculture Minister, Women Affairs Minister -- all are women.

- Domestic violence is a disaster. Bangladesh Cabinet has recently approved in principle the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010.
- To empower women, the Government has passed the Citizenship Rights Reform Bill. It will allow children of Bangladesh women to have their right to citizenship.
- The nation's highest court gave corrective guidance against sexual harassment.

Mr. Chairman,

in the area of peacekeeping operations, we have integrated gender perspective as well. We have female police officers in the uniformed Missions. An all female Formed Police Unit, the second of its kind, is working in the United Nations Mission in Liberia. Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1325, we believe, the international community should come forward to enhance the participation of women in conflict resolution, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction.

Mr. Chairman,

Addressing the acute vulnerability of women in the society, the Government has introduced several safety-net programs, such as Vulnerable Group Development Program, Widow Allowance, Elderly Persons Allowance, Maternity and Lactating Mother's Allowance and Allowance for women with disabilities.

Mr. Chairman,

We have set challenges and targets. Achieving MDG-5 is going to be a major challenge for us. Although we have increased the maternal mortality rate from 5.65 to 5.57 per 1,000 live births between 2004 and 2006, we still have a long way to go.

The concerted efforts of the Government as well as the NGOs over the years resulted in increased mobility and visibility of women in the society, both in rural and urban areas. Due to the success of the micro-credit programs and non-formal education, situation of women improved considerably even in the rural areas. However, there is still the urgent demand for easy access to affordable finance. In the urban areas, poor women lack social freedom through employment, mainly in industries such as garments, ceramics etc. Women labor force increased from 26.1% in 2003 to 29.2% in 2006. This is surely not enough to ensure economic freedom and independence of women.

Economic volatility, uncertain migration and status of future life are becoming a problem. Climate change will have a direct effect on all vulnerable groups like women and children. More importantly, they are the most vulnerable to environmental changes. It is a challenge.

Mr. Chairman,

Although developing countries are the home to majority of the world's poor women, they are worse off in attaining the goal of gender equality. While national governments like Bangladesh is trying hard to achieve gender equality, increased international cooperation, resource mobilization and stronger global partnership is more so on issues to avert climate change, financial meltdown and increasing food insecurity. Our limited resources are being directed to emergency relief operations owing to erratic climate conditions and recent food insecurity, and this is hindering us from achieving the MDGs. Therefore, we strongly urge the global community especially the developed countries to fulfill their ODA commitment of 0.7 percent of their GNI to developing countries and 0.2 percent to LDCs by 2010, as reaffirmed in the Brussels POA.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, promises and pledges are not enough. We need action on this ground. We are committed to do our part of the job we undertook. Now we need more than ever before the global community and leaders of the world to come forward for the good of mankind. I thank you, Mr. Chairman.