



BANGLADESH

Statement by

H.E. Dr. A K Abdul Momen

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 to the 23rd special session 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 aligns itself with the statement made by Yemen on behalf of G-77 and China. My intervention will, however, flag some of the issues that we consider important from our national perspective.

Mr. Chairman,

Advancement of women is one of the major policy priorities of the government of Bangladesh headed by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. In fact, Bangladesh has always been in the forefront of gender mainstreaming, gender equality and women empowerment in compliance with its international obligations including that of the 4th World Conference on Women, the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly and the Millennium Summit. Bangladesh became a State Party to CEDAW in 1984 and to its optional protocol in 2000. We abide by the reporting obligations too.

Immediately following the Beijing conference, Bangladesh government formulated the first National Policy for Women Advancement in 1997. In 1998, a National Plan of Action was drawn up for 15 ministries/ agencies 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 Children Affairs.

Mr. Chairman,

- As we focused heavily in female education, we already achieved MDG-3 target i.e. gender parity in primary and secondary education. We waived the tuition fees for female students up to the 12th grade. To promote graduate education among women, the Government is now trying to waive their tuition fees as well.
- Infant Mortality rate has reduced below 2.3 per 1000 for the first time in Bangladesh.
- Poverty eradication and women empowerment are highly linked and therefore, they constitute an integral feature of our development planning. We have already introduced Gender Responsive Budget and have taken initiatives in institutionalizing gender-responsive planning. Gender dimension is duly reflected in Bangladesh's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.
- In the last national election in 2008, more women voted in the election vis-à-vis men; and in the Bangladesh National Parliament, there are now 62 women members or 18% of the total.
- Presently, we have prominent representation of women in all professions including at decision-making positions. For example, our Prime Minister, our Leader of the Opposition, our 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 disgrace. 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 Bangladeshi mothers to have their right to citizenship.
- The nation's highest court gave corrective guideline against sexual harassment.

Mr. Chairman,

In the area of peacekeeping operations, we have integrated gender perspective as well. We have female peacekeepers on the ground in different Missions. An all female Formed Police Unit, the second of its kind, is ready for deployment. To implement 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 rehabilitation.

Mr. Chairman,

Taking into account the 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 many challenges ahead of us. Achieving MDG-5 is going to be a major challenge for us. Although we were able to decrease the maternal mortality rate from 3.65 to 3.37 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 unmet demand for easy access to affordable finance. In the urban areas, poor women could pursue their financial 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.

Emerging problem of female migration and status of them in the host countries are becoming a problem. Erratic climate change will badly affect especially our vulnerable group like women and children. More importantly, effective implementation of government policies itself 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 women empowerment, increased international cooperation, resource mobilization and stronger global partnership is imperative more so owing to adverse climatic change, financial meltdown and increasing food insecurity. Our limited resources are being diverted to emergency relief operations programs owing to erratic climatic disasters and consequent food insecurity and such is derailing 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 the ground. We are committed to do our part of the job and we did. 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.