



BANGLADESH

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Statement by

H.E. Ms. Ismat Jahan

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations
at the General Debate of the Third Committee of the 63rd Session of the UNGA

on

'Advancement of Women' [agenda item 56]

New York, 13 October 2008

As delivered

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement of Antigua and Barbuda made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. My intervention will, therefore, flag some of the issues that we consider particularly important from our national perspective.

Mr. Chairman,

Sustainable development would be a far cry without gender equality and empowerment of women. The MDGs provide a holistic framework for mainstreaming of a gender perspective into the new vision of development. Greater synergies should, therefore, be forged between the MDGs, Beijing Declarations and the CEDAW as a means to achieve all other development goals.

Gender perspectives should be mainstreamed into all United Nations actions relating to climate change, food and energy crises, food security as well as the deliberations of all major UN conferences and summits.

Enhanced role of women in rural and agricultural development and food production is critically important for increasing agricultural production thereby enhancing food security in an environmentally sustainable way. Besides, efforts should be made for women to build their capacity as 'agents of change' so that they can take charge of their own empowerment by leading the formulation and implementation of national development strategies. However, reliable sex disaggregated data is critically important to inform gender-responsive policymaking and implementation.

Advancement of women is one of the major policy priorities of the Government of Bangladesh. Bangladesh has always been in the forefront of gender mainstreaming, gender equality and empowerment of women in compliance with its international obligations including those set forth at the Fourth World Conference on Women, the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the Millennium Summit. Bangladesh is a State Party to almost all the major international instruments relating to women's right. We have active participation in the CEDAW and other relevant UN bodies. At the regional level, Bangladesh has been playing a pioneering role through SAARC to advance and realize its pro-women agenda.

We have a comprehensive national machinery to promote advancement of women. Our National Policy and the National Action Plan for the Advancement of Women are being implemented, among others, through incorporation of gender equality concerns in the National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction (NSAPR). The government has also announced the National Women's Development Policy-2008, which will provide a more focused intervention in advancement of women.

We have achieved gender parity at the primary and secondary school enrollment in line with the MDG 3. Our MDG Progress Report further reflects that gender issues have been duly considered and mainstreamed in relation to most of the MDGs.

Poverty eradication and empowerment of women are inextricably linked and therefore, they constitute an integral feature of our development planning. We have embarked on a Gender Responsive Budgeting. Gender dimension is duly reflected in Bangladesh's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. We have invested heavily in women's education, which is increasing every year.

Domestically inspired innovative ideas of access to micro-credit schemes and non-formal education have proved to be effective strategies for empowerment of our women. Micro-credit and micro-finance are fostering the entrepreneurship and employability of women with marginal resources as well as educational qualifications. Statistics show a steady increase in women employment both in the formal and non-formal sectors. Near about 30 percent of hard core poor of rural households are now headed by women economically.

Multidimensional peacekeeping operations have large potential in addressing the security and well being of women in conflict and post-conflict situations. We have integrated gender perspective in some aspects of UN peacekeeping operations. It is encouraging to note that the PBC considered human rights and gender equality issues in both its country-specific works and thematic discussions. The PBC should also implement Security Council resolution 1325 fully in conflict

resolution, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. As a member of the PBC we remain vigilant in our focus on the provisions of 1325.

Economic empowerment aided by government's proper policy directives has led our women to political empowerment. Women are eligible to contest direct elections in the national parliament in addition to a specific number of seats earmarked for them. Presently, we have prominent representation of women in all professions including at decision-making positions.

Combating trafficking in persons, particularly women and children is a top priority on our agenda. Bangladesh has enacted a number of legislative acts to protect women and girls from all sorts of violence. Given its trans-boundary character, we are also addressing it regionally under the aegis of SAARC. The launching of the campaign of the Secretary-General to end violence against women in February this year is expected to spur actions through national campaign.

Achieving gender equality is an agonizingly slow process, since it touches upon one of the most deeply entrenched human attitudes. We would need to beef up public awareness and advocacy to change the discriminatory outlook, behavioural pattern and stereotypes that perpetuate women's subordinate status in the society.

The past few decades have witnessed a heightened international awareness of the need to empower women. Despite the intense efforts and numerous inspiring successes and outcomes, it is a disturbing reality that no country has yet managed to eliminate gender disparity completely. A significant gap between global policy and national level implementation remains in many countries in relation to implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action.

Although developing countries are the home to majority of the world's poor womenfolk, they are worse off in attaining the goal of gender equality. Scaled up efforts and cross-sectoral approach of the national governments, therefore, have to be sustained by increased international cooperation, resource mobilization and stronger global partnership. Use of ODA for empowerment of women could reap higher social and economic returns. The multi-lateral financial institutions and donors should take account the importance of gender-sensitive employment and hunger and poverty eradication strategies. Aid modalities and reform should be realigned with gender equality. Adequate resources have to be assigned throughout the UN system as well. Above all, we should convince ourselves to dish out to the women of the world what they so rightfully deserve.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.
