



BANGLADESH

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Statement by H.E. Mr. Masud Bin Momen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN, at the 57th Commission for Social Development on Agenda item 3:

- (a) Priority theme: addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies;**
- (b) Review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups: (i) World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons; (ii) Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities; (iii) World Programme of Action for Youth; (iv) Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002; (v) Family issues, policies and programmes**

14 February 2019, Conference Room 4, UNHQ, New York

Thank you, Mr. Chair, [Mr. Cheikh Niang, Senegal]

Bangladesh delegation aligns itself with the statement made by G77 and China.

As a current member, Bangladesh is committed to engage meaningfully with Member States in pursuing this year's priority theme. For that, particular attention must be given to the poor, marginalized, vulnerable and socially disadvantaged groups. They constitute the 'global bottom' 50% and their income share remains stagnated. In terms of wealth inequality, 3.7 billion people who make up the poorest half of the world, saw no increase in their wealth. In such a precarious scenario, we need to see how we can further align and accommodate within our policy framework the intrinsic elements of the World Summit for Social Development and 24th special session of the Assembly as well as other such initiatives to address all aspects of social developments.

Mr. Chair,

Bangladesh, under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has been doing remarkably well in advancing its overall socio-economic development with sustained improvement in the human development index. Yet we cannot ignore the fact that as a country with a huge population, inequality remains a major obstacle to achieving more inclusive development. Our government is working relentlessly to ensure that all people can equally participate in and share the benefits of economic development in a

sustainable manner. Our fulfillment of LDC criteria for the first-time last year is an endorsement to that. A major thrust of our development strategy has been our focus on and commitment to addressing inequality. The means that we have adopted for that purpose are mainly: poverty eradication; access to education, health, employment & social security; and financial inclusion.

Poverty eradication through people-oriented policy, programme and strategies have been the mainstay of our development model. We have brought down the poverty level from 56.7% in 1991 to 23.2% today. Our sustained progress in alleviating poverty has given us a strong foundation to pursue the 2030 agenda in particular SDG 1.

We allocate over 13% of our budget to social safety net spending, which is 2.3% of our GDP. We have endeavoured that our inclusive and “whole-of-society” approach is reflected while we formulate fiscal, wage and social protection policies by factoring in the specific needs of disadvantaged social groups of our population- women, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities and also to families so that no one is left behind.

We are also committed to promoting inclusive, just and equitable societies. Government is conscious in policy interventions for making its incentives, programmes and projects available to the poor, vulnerable and heard-to-reach population. The social protection systems have been designed to cover all people throughout the life cycle. As we support our women and youth to contribute to our mainstream of economic activities, we equally care for our elderly, widow and dependent parents. Family has been one of the main enabling factors in our efforts towards social protection and social inclusion. We support inter-generational solidarity. We continue to strengthen national family-centered policies and programmes.

Skills and knowledge are regarded as the key driving forces under the “Vision 2021” of the present Government to achieve Middle Income Country Status by 2021. Our government is investing significant resources for the human resources development especially for the youth. We have achieved 100% enrollment at the primary level several years back. Literacy rate has increased from 45% to 72.9% in the last decade.

To overcome challenges of income and other forms of inequalities, we are focusing on advancing women’s participation. Bangladesh has achieved gender parity in primary and secondary school enrollment quite some time back. Our women are regarded as ‘bankable’, also having easy access to ‘micro saving’ schemes. Women entrepreneurs are offered collateral free bank loans, business start-up funds and industrial plots. We promote equal pay for work of equal value and embed gender equality in all our policymaking. To boost income growth, we recently reviewed twice the minimum wages of our ready-made garments, the largest export earning sector, where women constitute 80% of the 4.5 million workers. Women in Bangladesh are now working side by side their male counterparts in

almost every sphere of life. According to the Global Gender Gap index 2018, Bangladesh has closed over 72% of its overall gender gap.

In spite of the best efforts put in by the government and other partners for adaptation and mitigation, Bangladesh continues to face existential threats due to climate change that directly hit the poorest and other vulnerable population the most. We need enhanced partnership and burden sharing to enable the vulnerable people to cope up with these challenges. If we can reduce their vulnerabilities which contributes to income and other forms of inequalities, we can expect that to become our strength as we move towards more social inclusion.

Mr. Chair,

Globally, we have indeed made significant strides towards lifting people out of poverty but inequality within and among countries especially, the most vulnerable ones – the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDs, still remains a grave concern. Obviously, more needs to be done to support these group of countries which can be done by easing their terms of trade and ensuring enhanced transfer of technologies and strengthening triangular cooperation. Bangladesh always pursued the interest of LDCs in global discourse particularly during her LDC Coordinator-ship and would continue to do so. We, therefore, join the call today for renewed partnerships to support national efforts to fight inequality and poverty.

We look forward to take the discussions and recommendations from the Commission to the 2019 High-Level Political Forum theme of which is closely aligned.

Only through our collective efforts we would be able to reduce inequalities, eradicate poverty, and promote social inclusion; only that would make us achieve the high objectives of the 2030 Agenda

I thank you all.