

H.E. Dr. A.K. Abdul Momen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of
Bangladesh at the Side Event titled
Violence against women and the Human Rights to Peace
05 March 2013,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me and my Mission to host this side event on this very important topic titled “violence against women and human rights to peace”.

02. Violence against women and girls is one of the most prevalent violations of human rights. It has significant costs on the economy and development of a country and impedes the pursuit of peace. When the United Nations was created, the founders proclaimed their faith in strengthening universal peace and promoting and encouraging respect for human rights without discrimination were among the main purposes of the organization. During the past few decades, the United Nations had worked, with the support of Member States and civil society organizations, towards creating a peaceful environment in which all persons including women could fully enjoy their fundamental human rights. It has been recognized that a peaceful environment is not possible if women's rights are not realized. To this end, over the years, women's rights have been elaborated in Conventions, declarations and plans of action. The same has then been articulated in national constitutions and laws. Progress has been made throughout the world. Gender gaps in education and health have been narrowed. Maternal mortality rates were decreased.

03. However, this record of progress cannot hide the fact that women still suffer disproportionately from violence. It is horrifying to learn that even today, 7 in 10 women experience some level of violence at some point in their lifetime. We have tons of papers on what to do and how to do. But have we translated those commitments into action?? The barbaric atrocities committed against students in India and Pakistan are painful reminders that we have not. There is much to do.

04. Bangladesh's commitment to end violence against women and girls are well recognized. Immediately after our independence, under the leadership of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, we adopted a constitution in 1972 guaranteeing equal rights for men and women in every sphere of life. Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the government adopted pragmatic policies and programmes to end violence against women and girls.

05. We believe that women's empowerment and their full and effective participation in all spheres of society is fundamental to end violence against women, achieve

sustainable development and peace. We know that **education is the agent of change**. Therefore, emphasis is given on the education of girls. Girl's education has been made free up to higher secondary level. Special stipend for girls has increased their enrollment in higher secondary and graduation level. Gender parity, a prime target of MDG-3, has been achieved in primary and secondary levels. Currently, the male-female ratio at secondary level is 47:53. The National Women's Development Policy, which is in place since 2001 has been revised to suit our current needs.

06. **Women's economic independence** can be an important tool for ending violence against them. Economic empowerment raises the dignity and status of women in the family and society. In Bangladesh, steps have been taken to ensure economic empowerment of women through job creation for them. 10% quota is in place for women in government services. Women now hold high positions in the judiciary, administrative, diplomatic, army and law enforcement services. In the Parliament, we have 69 female Parliament members. Prime Minister, Deputy Leader of the House, Opposition Leader, and many key Ministries including Foreign Ministry is headed by Women leaders. Recently for the first time the country, it has elected its first female mayor. More than 12,000 women are elected in Union Council. One-third of all Union Council Chairperson/Vice Chairpersons are female.

07. Poor and Rural women are the main victims of violence. In order to empower this vulnerable section, Government has introduced various programs and allowances. Currently, 920,000 rural women are getting some kind of allowances. 750,000 rural women have been brought under vulnerable Group Development Program. Collateral free micro-credit is given to rural women with 5% service charge.

08. In order to stop violence against women, several laws are in place. Such as Suppression of violence Against Women and Children (Amendment) Act 2003, Acid control Act 2002, Dowry Prohibition Act 1980, Family court Ordinance 1985, Prevention and Restraint of Human Trafficking Act 2012, Pornography control Act 2011 and Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2012. In addition to enactment of laws, One Stop Crisis Centers in 7 Divisions are providing medical treatment, legal support, policy assistance and rehabilitation of victims. DNA Profiling lab and DNA screening labs have been established in few national hospitals.

09. When a woman is victimized, the first place she seeks remedy is nearby police station. In this situation female police personnel plays an instrumental role. Accordingly, in the last few years, the government has recruited more than 3,000 female police officers. Our victim support center is run by trained, professional women officers making the center more approachable for women victims. Training on international laws and conventions are being imparted to judges, and law enforcement agencies to make them conversant with the existing international framework.

10. Laws and rules cannot alone ensure justice for women if the mindset of the male and female partners is not changed. Awareness raising programs and advocacy are conducted with specific focus on engaging men and boys in prevention of violence against women and changing stereotype mindset.

11. Every woman and girl have a right to live in free from fear, live in dignity, live in peace. Malala, Damini or Jagruti are only a few, whose tragic story came up as breaking news. There are millions of them, whose cry could not reach us. We do not want to see them as Shocking headlines; We do not want our actions to be limited to candle light marches or to chanting of slogans. We have to remember "Humankind is made up of two sexes, women and men. Is it possible for humankind to grow by the improvement of only one part while the other part is ignored? Is it possible that if half of a mass is tied to earth with chains that the other half can soar into skies?"

Thank you all.