



Statement by

**H.E. Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN in New York at the General Debate of the 58th CSW on Agenda item: "Challenges and achievements in the implementation of MDGs for women and girls."**

New York, 17 March 2014

**Mr. Chair:**

Today is a very special day for us. On this day, our father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was born 95 years ago and I convey my greetings to all on this august day. He was a great achiever and let me pray and wish that our deliberations of the day also result in achievements. I also would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman on your well-deserved election as the Chair of this very important session. Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of G77 & China. This year's session has a special significance.

As we are approaching the final phases of MDG deadline, the Commission's focus on *Challenges and achievements in the implementation of MDGs for women and girls* will provide a space to reflect on our progresses and gaps with regard to our achievements of MDGs. The action-oriented document that we all hope to adopt this week, would serve as important inputs for shaping gender sensitive future goals.

**Mr. Chair:**

02. The Government of Bangladesh has integrated the MDGs in the broader area of its social and economic development policies. We have achieved or on track in achieving most of the MDGs within the target date. We have successfully reduced poverty from 58.8% in 1991 to below 26% now. Our pro-poor policies enabled us to sustain an average GDP growth rate of 6.3% even during the global recession. Our special program for economic empowerment of women like skill development, credit facilities, social safety net for rural women have impacted widely in reducing poverty.

03. Bangladesh has achieved a commendable progress in education with 99.5% net enrolment rate. While programmes like school feeding, free textbooks to students up to the secondary level helped in reducing dropouts; stipends and exemption of tuition fees for girls up to 12th grade, financial assistance to underprivileged students specially girls from Prime Minister's Education Assistance Trust Fund are also supporting in achieving gender parity.

04. Our National Policy for Women's Advancement 2011 has led to greater involvement of women in the national development. It also targets to ensure women's participation in all walks

of life. We are one of the few countries in the world, which has women leadership for more than two decades. We have been ranked 8th in terms of political empowerment of women. Apart from the Prime Minister, we have women speaker, Leader of the Opposition Party, Deputy leader of the Parliament, several cabinet ministers, judges, ambassadors and permanent secretaries are all women. In the parliament 50 seats are reserved for women, and another 20 female MPs were elected directly. Nearly 12,000 women leaders have been elected in local government offices. Recently we also have first female Vice-Chancellor in one of our public universities.

05. On the area of Health, the Government of Bangladesh under its national health policy, established nearly 15,000 community clinics and healthcare centers to provide quality healthcare services, emergency care for mothers and newborns. Programs like training for midwives, e-health, free immunization, Vitamin A supplementation all are contributing positively in achieving health related MDGs. We have reduced under-5 mortality rate to 36 per 1,000 live births in 2012, against targeted 48 by 2015 and maternal mortality from 322 in 2001 to 194 in 2010, which accounts for a 40 percent decline. In the area of communicable diseases, our progress is mentionable with less than 0.1% HIV/AIDS prevalence, prevention of TB and Malaria. In our secondary schools, 53% are girls while 47% are boys.

06. However, there are still areas where we are facing challenges. Nutrition of women and children, child marriage, and stunting are big challenges for us. Moreover, our achievements are being eroded by frequent visit of natural disasters and impacts of climate changes. We are worried of our sustainability due to abuse and misuse of global resources that help increasing global erratic climate changes. While we are trying to address those challenges by our national-led efforts, yet we would also need sustained international partnership and resource mobilization for adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer, green fund and rehabilitation of our uprooted climate migrants.

**Mr. Chair:**

07. As we are deliberating on the next sets of development goals, my delegation would like to emphasize that no development is possible without the development and empowerment of women and girls especially in LDCs. We need to continue our focus on Women empowerment and Gender equality beyond 2015 and more importantly on ending of sex discrimination. Empowerment of women and ending discrimination should also be reflected as a cross-cutting issue in the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

Secondly, women empowerment should be taken as a thrust area in all policy interventions in every country. The smart way to achieve development is to ensure rightful place of women in society through facilitating their access to resources, education, health care and employment, offering them social protection through extension of social safety nets. We found this approach quite effective in our national context. By just ensuring access of women to credit, facilitating their education and extending health care, and also developing gender-sensitive budget allocation, we have been able to make significant progress in the empowerment of women in Bangladesh.

In conclusion, the need of the hour is not only advocacy but also strong political will and global sustained partnership as well as strong means of implementation. We have a big challenge and great opportunity before us, and we must not miss this opportunity for the good of our future

generations. May I echo the words of our national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam who nearly 90 years ago wrote and I quote,

"Shamyar ghan Gai,  
Amar Chokke Purush-Romoni Kunu vedaved Nai  
Bishe Jaha kichu Mohan Sristhi Chiro Kollankor  
Ordek thar koriachey nari, ordek thar nor".

I sing the song of gender equality  
In my eyes, there is no difference between men and women  
whatever great and noble created in this universe  
half is done by women, half by men  
I sing the song of equality.

I thank you