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Statement by
H.E. Dr. A.K. Abdul Momen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of
Bangladesh
at the General Debate of the Third Committee of the 69th Regular Session of the UNGA
on Agenda item 26: Social Development
New York, 07 October 2014

Thank you Madam Chair,

At the outset, let me congratulate you and other members of the Bureau for your well-deserved elections. My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Plurinational State of Bolivia on behalf of G77 and China.

Madam Chair,

02. The adoption of historic Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of action in 1995, put people at the center of development agenda. It also identified poverty eradication, social inclusion, full employment and decent work for all as key elements for people's empowerment. The Millennium Declaration also reiterated the call to reduce extreme poverty and hunger. With less than one year in hand to achieve MDGs, it is frustrating that billions of people are still suffering from extreme poverty, hunger, disease, malnutrition and illiteracy, and millions live in situation of conflict and deprivation of their fundamental freedoms, peace remains elusive than ever. As we have entered at a critical juncture of formulation of next sets of development goals for another 15 years, we need to invest smartly so that our investment brings meaningful changes. This is only possible by bringing people at the heart of our development discourse.

Madam Chair:

03. Bangladesh being a small (94th in size) country in terms of geography but 8th largest in population in the world and with very limited resources has been following a people-centric approach in our development agenda. We are thankful to member states for adopting with consensus our resolution A/67/107 titled "People's Empowerment: A Peace-centric Development Model" in 2012. This model is the brain-child of our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who believes that people can face emerging challenges successfully if they are empowered. And they can be empowered by eliminating

extreme poverty, by providing education, skills and training, by eliminating all sorts of discrimination and extremism, by including the excluded people, by guaranteeing them participation in governance, and by ensuring them jobs and decent living. These 7-elements need to be looked into to have a 'pro-people, pro-planet, inclusive, peaceful and sustainable world for all'.

04. Education, more specifically quality education, has been identified as an enabler for people's empowerment. This is very sad indeed that an estimated 250 million children of primary school age are not acquiring basic skills for reading, writing and mathematics. This means access to education is not enough. What we need is quality education.

Therefore, the government of Bangladesh has given high priority to the improvement of the quality of education to enable our boys and girls to acquire necessary life skills and grow up with a truly global outlook. Education sector is receiving significant resource allocation from our national budget. Incentives like free education for all up to Class 12; free text books totaling 331 million up to twelve grade; stipends for girls to encourage enrolment and also to reduce drop-out rates, school feeding to increase nutrition-intake and attendance, plus "Prime Minister's Education Assistance Trust Fund" for financial assistance to underprivileged meritorious students, establishing modern infrastructure in educational institutions are proving to be effective. We have trained nearly a million secondary teachers in quality teaching and evaluation methods.

Our 'Digital Bangladesh' vision for a technology-driven society inspired us to make ICT knowledge compulsory for school and college students. Text books are now made available online also.

Madam Chair:

05. People's empowerment is not possible without empowerment of women. Women are at the forefront of our national development initiatives. Special programs directed to female education, maternal healthcare services, women entrepreneurship through collateral free credits, vocational training for women, extended period of maternal leave, women awareness build-up programs, affirmative quota for women in jobs and elected positions, social protection for vulnerable women, micro-credit financing, one-house-one-farm programme- all these have contributed positively in mainstreaming women into development agenda. Bangladesh is possibly the only

country today where women simultaneously hold high positions of Prime Minister, Speaker, and Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader.

06. Mainstreaming youth in the overall development process is another priority for the Government. Comprehensive initiative has been undertaken for skill development of young people by providing extensive training in different sectors. Skill enhancement training program has been undertaken with a view to enhancing the capacity to access the domestic as well as overseas labor markets. At the same time, arrangements have been made to provide micro-credit on easy terms to encourage the trained youths to be self-employed and productive entrepreneurs.

07. Despite our many social, economic, political and environmental challenges, and more importantly resource constraints, we have made substantial progress in bringing the issue of disability to the forefront. Our resolution entitled “Addressing the socioeconomic needs of individuals, families and societies affected by autism spectrum (ASD) developmental disorders and other associated disabilities”, was adopted with consensus by all the Member States in 2012. We have significantly addressed our primary challenge, social stigma which permeates all aspects of our society. Particular attention is being given to ensuring right to education of children with disabilities. Apart from formal learning, skills development program and vocational training are imparted to PWDs to help them get self-employed.

Madam Chair:

08. While policy formulation and implementation at the national level are vital for empowerment of people, enhanced **international cooperation** and collaboration is a pre-requisite for sustaining the national efforts. Unfortunately, development efforts of developing countries are being held back by resource constraints and inadequate and uncertain, unpredictable external resource availability. We need our development partners to keep their pledge of contributing 0.7% of their GNP as ODA, and 0.2% of GNI as ODA to the LDCs.

Second, we must keep in mind that human rights cannot be ensured in vacuum without ensuring economic development of the people.

Third, development efforts of many coastal countries like ours are being eroded by frequent attack by **natural disasters** and environmental challenges. We need meaningful and concrete support from global community to address this challenge.

Fourth, Family as a fundamental unit of society, and it plays an important role in social development. Family-oriented policies contribute to poverty reduction, ensuring education and upbringing of children, care for elders and persons with disabilities. Therefore, special focus should be given to support family.

In conclusion, the need of the hour is not only advocacy but also global sustained partnership. Our commitments must be complemented by strong means of implementation. I have no doubt that through a strong political commitment and partnership, we will achieve “the future we want” that we envisioned for in the Rio+20.

I thank you all.