



BANGLADESH

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Statement by

**H.E. Dr. A.K. Abdul Momen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative,
Permanent Mission of Bangladesh, at the General Debate of the Third
Committee of the 69th Session of the UNGA on 'Advancement of women'
New York, 14 October 2014**

Thank you Mr. Chair.

The famous author Diane Mariechild wrote “A woman is the full circle. Within her is the power to create, nurture and transform.” Without advancement of women no development is possible. An empowered woman can substantially contribute to the health, education and productivity of her family and thereby accelerate overall development.

Mr. Chair:

02. Women empowerment has always been a priority agenda for my government. 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 7th 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 women. In the parliament 50 seats are reserved for women, while women can participate in direct election. 20 female MPs were elected through direct election during the recently held 10th National parliamentary election. Nearly 12,000 women leaders have been elected in local government offices. Just recently we also have first female Vice-Chancellor in one of our public university.

03. We maintain 10% quota for women to enhance their access to all public sector employments. Additional opportunities are available for women with disabilities and those from ethnic minorities. Maternity leave has been extended up to six months in public services. Special credit facilities are available for promoting women's entrepreneurship. Since 2009 number of women entrepreneurs have quadrupled. 3.3 million women have been given micro-finance for entrepreneur leadership. The corporate sector, academia, civil society organisations and media are also setting new benchmarks in visible women's leadership. Our manufacturing especially the main export earner, the readymade Garments sector is basically run by women--- more than 95% of all garment workers are female. The women workforce in our job market jumped from 7% in 2000 to over 30% now. This is not a mean achievement.

04. As a Champion State in UN Secretary General's Education First Initiative, we believe educating girls free of cost to be our best bet for women empowerment, best bet against violence against women, child marriage and extremist mindsets that wish to crimp women's social mobility. Our girls receive 75% of the financial

support given from our Prime Minister's Education Assistance Fund up to graduation level.

05. We have set up record numbers of vocational training institutes that provides vocational training in farming, computer and ICT, tailoring and beautification, RMG industry and housekeeping, for national and overseas employment.

06. As we commit to further improving our overall standing in women's empowerment and leadership in all spheres with particular emphasis on their health, education, protection and economic opportunities, let me emphasis on the followings:

- a. No development is possible without the development and empowerment of women and girls. We need to continue our focus on Women empowerment.
- b. 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.

Mr. Chair:

07. 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. Each year, the global community spends trillions of dollars for defence expenditure yet it neither could enhance our security or our sense of security. therefore, let us divert some resources away from defence expenditure to women empowerment.

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

*Gahe shammyer gaan,
Bishe Ja kichu mohan sristri,
Ordek thar koriache nari
Ordek thar noor,
Gahe shammyer gaan.*

In English:

I sing the song of equality
Whatever great and noble created in this universe
Half is done by women, half by men
I sing the song of equality.

Thank you all.