



## BANGLADESH

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**Statement by Shah Asif Rahman, Minister, Bangladesh Permanent Mission to the UN, at  
the 58<sup>th</sup> Commission for Social Development  
on Agenda item 3  
13 February 2020, Conference Room 4, UNHQ, New York**

Thank you, Madam Chair. Let me join others in congratulating you and other members of the Bureau on your elections. You can count on my delegation's full support.

Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement made earlier by G77 and China. We thank the Secretary General for his informative report which sets a good basis for our discussions.

[Madam Chair] This year we celebrate the landmark event of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the **World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995**, the outcomes of which still remain the guiding principles to pursue social development. This year also marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations, and of our Commission, the oldest and pioneering multilateral forum for advancing social development.

The discussion at this year's Commission is groundbreaking too, as it takes up as a priority theme the issue of homelessness, with a view to sharing best practices and innovative solutions to provide affordable housing and how to embed that in social security policies and programmes at the national level. If we can agree on a good outcome, this will indeed be groundbreaking and define the course for the future.

[Madam Chair] The recent OECD report found that while availability of affordable housing trends varies across countries, the cost of housing is increasing at a rate incompatible with the household median income, creating a critical impediment to affordable housing. An estimated 440 million affordable houses will be needed by 2025.

Although in varying degree, homelessness is experienced both in developed and developing world. According to the Secretary General's report, in 2018, 80 per cent of the more than 1 billion people globally are living in slums or informal settlements in the developing countries, mostly in East & South-East Asia, Central & South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. That's a staggering figure and an urgent wake-up call. We need to move to actions.

The report has also highlighted some of the structural causes of homelessness and plight of various groups including persons with disabilities, youth, and the aged. Our strategies to address different categories of homelessness should be sensitive to include these vulnerable groups in a "whole-of-society" approach, if we are to overcome homelessness in a holistic manner. We have to design and plan specific interventions with short to long term perspective.

Resources need to be mobilized to ensure social security provisions to reduce the vulnerability of these disadvantaged segments of the population. And this has to be done both at the national and global levels. Efforts of the developing countries, especially the LDCs, must be supported, **in order to address to poverty, inequality and exclusion contributing to homelessness.**

[Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen] Let me briefly share our national efforts to address poverty, and social exclusion and inequalities. Our Constitution embodies the principles of social justice and social security to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens. It's a constitutional commitment for us.

The Government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has adopted pro-people and family centric programmes and policies for emancipation of the poor and disadvantaged to bring them into the mainstream of national development. In our national policies for the implementation of the SDGs, we have taken a more strategic and accountable path of a "development approach" rather than a "charity approach" particularly for the vulnerable groups of our population. All our programmes and policies including ongoing National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) are aligned with the Agenda 2030. We are implementing the vision of "Building an inclusive Social Security System (SSS) for all deserving Bangladeshis that effectively tackle and prevent poverty and inequality and contributes to broader

human development, employment and economic growth”. With special emphasis and provisions for the most vulnerable such as the aged, persons with disabilities and female headed households.

Bangladesh has achieved one of the fastest poverty reduction rates in the world despite our modest resource base. We have brought down the poverty level from 56.7% in 1991 to 20.5% in 2019. We aim to bring down extreme poverty to single digit soon. We allocate 13.5% of our budget to social safety net spending, which is approximately 2.5% of our GDP and every year it is expanding, targeting SDG 1.3.

We have extensive and innovative programmes for the homeless and the landless. As our Prime Minister has said - “Nobody in the country will remain homeless”. There are different programmes such as Ashrayan-1 and Ashrayan-2 for the homeless. There are also massive projects to provide affordable housing facilities, including through providing lower interest loan for clients who are homeless.

[Madam Chair] As we celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the WSSD this year, let us renew our commitment to the core objectives of Copenhagen Declaration and Program of Action which calls for building a culture of cooperation and partnership and to respond to the immediate needs of those who are most affected by human distress. Let us make real progress in ‘righting the wrongs.’ **With more than 80% of the global 1 billion homeless population living in the developing world, we cannot have a business as usual approach to our work.** Let us leverage on the opportunity created by this year’s landmark occasions, and this year’s priority theme to further advance social development by intensifying our respective efforts in true spirit of partnership.

I thank you all.