**Press Release**

**Bangladesh Ambassador Rabab Fatima introduces first ever UNGA resolution on vision impairment**

**New York, 23 July 2021:**

The United Nations General Assembly has today, 23 July 2021, unanimously adopted the first ever UN resolution on vision impairment which committed access to eye health for the 1.1 billion people living with preventable sight loss by 2030. Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations in New York, Ambassador Rabab Fatima introduced the resolution on behalf of the Friends of Vision, an informal like-minded group at the UN who advocates for the greater access to eye heath care for over 2 billion people currently living with various levels of visual impairment. The resolution titled “Vision for Everyone: accelerating action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals” is unique as it is the first agreement among the Member States of this highest global body and is designed to tackle preventable sight loss. The other two co-chairs of the Group are Antigua & Barbuda and Ireland who have joined Bangladesh in proposing the resolution. 115 member states cosponsored the resolution.

Ambassador Fatima, in her speech made on this occasion, dedicated this resolution to all people around the world who are visually impaired or handicapped, and urged all countries in the world to set a target for vision for everyone by 2030 by ensuring full access to eye care services for their populations. This resolution has a strong mandate and is expected to send a strong message of hope to the millions of visually impaired.

Bangladesh PR mentioned, “The adoption of today’s resolution on vision is a watershed moment in global efforts for vision care. 1.1 billion people live with preventable sight loss. Preventable sight loss is a global challenge that needs a global solution – and that is what we have agreed today. What we agreed today will make a world of a difference to the lives of billions and their families and communities”.

Referring to a global survey data, Bangladesh Ambassador stated that vision impairment and blindness pose an enormous global financial burden with the annual global costs of productivity losses estimated to be US$ 411 billion. However, access to eye care can not only reduce children’s odds of failing in the class by 44%, but it can also increase the odds of obtaining paid employment by 10%. This is also an equity issue as 55% of the blind people are women and girls; and they are 8% more likely to be blind than men, she added.

Bangladesh’s PR in her speech mentioned, “Millions of people globally lose their visions, needlessly. And this phenomenon largely impedes their ability to contribute to their full potentials to the socio-economic development of their societies. The resolution before us has the potential to reverse this situation”.

The resolution calls upon the Member States to make eye health integral to their nation’s commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The resolution also asks for international financial institutions and donors to provide targeted finances, especially to support developing countries in tackling preventable sight loss. It calls on relevant UN institutions to support global efforts to achieve vision for everyone to achieve the SDGs.The resolution also calls for new targets on eye care to be included in the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals at its next review.

About 90% of people who do not have access to proper eye health care live in low- and middle-income countries. In Bangladesh, according to an estimate of 2018, the number of blind people aged 30 and above is 750,000 and more than 6 million people in Bangladesh need vision correction by spectacles or by any other means.

The Government of Bangladesh is one of the signatories to the Global Initiative launched in 1999 known as Vision 2020.

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