

**Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh): At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month and on arranging this open debate on the issue of women and peace and security.

Today, I proudly recollect our sweet memory of the Security Council's adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), during the Bangladesh's presidency of the Council, when we worked to improve justice, ensuring that rape was listed as a crime against humanity under Bangladesh's 1973 International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, leading the drive for a zero-tolerance approach to sexual abuse in United Nations peacekeeping, and nurturing a culture of peace. This was the first resolution on social issues that incorporated a broad narrative for victims of violence, trauma, stigmatization and rape, as well as the illegitimate children of rape victims.

The main pillars of resolution 1325 (2000) are ensuring women's increased participation in decision-making; their involvement in mechanisms aimed at preventing, managing and resolving conflicts; their engagement in peace negotiations and their mainstreaming into peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations, with an emphasis on training and raising awareness about sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

Fifteen years later, many credible reports state that violence against women and girls is on the rise. Women and girls continue to suffer most as victims of conflicts, while they generally do not benefit from the dividends of peace processes. Women and girls are viewed as bearers of cultural and ethnic identities and thus become prime targets for the perpetrators of violence. The onus therefore lies on us to ensure that the oppression of women and girls, particularly through gender-related acts, is stopped forever.

It is our firm conviction that our deliberations today will result in concrete proposals and specific guidelines that will have an important bearing on our continued implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). We are all aware that poverty, deprivation, marginalization, discrimination, socioeconomic injustices and, even more importantly, the politics of subjugation and supremacy lie at the heart of conflicts and violence, and that women, unfortunately, are always at the receiving end of the consequences of such social inequities, political games and exhibitions of leadership ego. I therefore call on my colleagues to make specific proposals and propose concrete measures that will require us to take stock, nationally and internationally, of ways to end violence against women and the proliferation of the conflicts that may haunt us all, create uncertainty and chaos and have the potential to sweep away our achievements and our sense of stability and security.

We recognize that empowering women means ensuring that they command resources and a leadership capability adequate to efficient management of those resources. We therefore

emphasize the importance of meeting women's economic needs and engaging them at all levels and in all forms of the decision-making process. The former can be achieved by ensuring women's access to and participation in areas related to income generation and entrepreneurship, such as microfinancing, education, vocational training and public health; the latter through their engagement in positions of influence, and particularly, for example, in

senior United Nations positions, including those at the level of assistant secretary-general, under-secretary-general, special representative and so forth.

For a proper understanding of the issues, and sensitivity to cultural, ethnic and religious needs, recruits from countries of the South should be considered for such positions. Secondly, for effective coordination with staff working in the field, we should ensure that troop- and police-contributing countries are fairly represented, as has previously been discussed in the General Assembly.

The principal responsibility for protecting women falls within the purview of national Governments. Any action taken by the international community must therefore be consistent with national policies, guidelines and action plans. In that context, I deem it a privilege to make a few remarks concerning women's empowerment based on my national perspective.

The education of girls is a vehicle for their advancement, and the Government of Bangladesh has therefore waived tuition fees for female students up to grade 12. By providing women with improved health care, the child mortality rate at birth has been reduced by 72 per cent and the maternal mortality rate by two-thirds. Women have also been provided with a door-to-door family-planning service, which continues to guide women on sexual and various social issues, including converting one's house into a farm by producing household vegetables and poultry, and on other family welfare social benefits. It was envisaged as a development package.

The Government is implementing a number of projects to develop women's capabilities. They include a vulnerable group development programme, collateral-free loans, micro-credit, skills training, including computer skills, product display centres, and so on. Women registered for a vulnerable group development programme and hired for rural works receive skills training and credit, or some simple capital machinery, such as a sewing machine, so that they can set up their own small enterprise. Many affirmative actions have been taken that help women in distress and old age. In order to include women in decision-making, the Government has adopted a quota system for women in the national legislative assembly and in the recruitment process of all civil and police services.

To assist women in distress, the Government has established one-stop crisis cells in 40 districts and one-stop crisis centres in all divisional medical college hospitals. The Government has also set up a DNA- profiling lab and a national trauma counseling centre.

In the legal field, several laws have been enacted to protect women. This includes the Domestic Violence Act, 2010; the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Rules, 2013; and DNA Rules, 2014. A draft is being prepared to enact a child marriage control act. We have also enacted the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1980. I note that, in order to implement the Prevention of Oppression against Women and Children Act, 2000, a Women and Children Oppression Prevention Tribunal has been set up in each district so that cases can be tried rapidly.

Today, women occupy the top political leadership in Bangladesh. Our Prime Minister, Speaker of the National Parliament, Deputy Leader of the House, Minister of Agriculture, the State Minister for Women and Children Affairs are all female leaders. In addition, the leader of the opposition is also a woman. More importantly, for the quarter-century since 1991, both leaders of the House and the opposition have been women. In addition, there is a silent and comprehensive women's empowerment ongoing throughout the country, especially in the rural areas. Nearly 14,000 women have been elected in local elections and the female participation rate in the labour market has jumped from 7 per cent to 36 per cent. They are becoming economically independent and the surge is helping them to be empowered and engaged in nation-building.

The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees equality of men and women within the broad framework of non-discrimination on the grounds of religion, race or gender. The father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founder of sovereign Bangladesh, grounded gender equality in the basic principles of democracy.

With regard to the maintenance of international peace and security, we take pride in our modest contribution of troops and police to United Nations peacekeeping missions. Our policy decision to recruit women in police and military amply demonstrates our commitment to women's empowerment nationally and in the United Nations maintenance of peace and security. We are pleased that we have deployed two full contingents of an all-female formed police unit to Haiti and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I am pleased to inform the Council that our all-male troop contingents are fully briefed on the gender issue. The good news is that none of our peacekeepers have been involved in sexual exploitation and abuse.

We place special emphasis on promoting and supporting women's active and meaningful participation in all peace processes, as well as on their representation in formal and

informal decision-making; improving partnerships and networking with local and international groups working in the field; and recruiting and appointing women to senior positions. We commit to putting forward as many female candidates as we can in the future to serve the international community under the United Nations system.

In conclusion, I would reiterate that we have made our best efforts to ensure women's empowerment and participation in all spheres of life. We know that much more needs to be done. We are open to replicate any good practices in our national policy, and we are ready to suitably share our experience with others. I hope that the Council's deliberations will help develop specific proposals, a clear message and concrete suggestions that would demonstrate its commitment to women's empowerment and challenge us all to achieve our goals of gender parity and women's engagement to create a peaceful world for all of us.

Almost 95 years ago, our national poet, Kazi Nazrul Islam, wrote that whatever great or benevolent achievements there are in the world, half of them were by women, the other half by man. Therefore, we must be fully engaged for the good of humankind.