



BANGLADESH

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STATEMENT

BY

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At the

Open Debate of the Security Council

On

"Women, Peace and Security"

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Mr. President,

Let me begin by complimenting you for the manner in which you have been stewarding the Council's deliberations during the current month and your initiative in organizing this open debate on a subject so close to every Bangladeshi heart. Mr. Guehenno's comprehensive briefing is also deserving of high praise. We feel privileged today by the gracious presence of Ms. Angela King and Ms. Amy Smyth.

Gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment are key components of Bangladesh's policy thrusts. It has indeed gone a long way towards aiding our own positive societal transformation. Also towards marginalizing extremist and irrational thought and action. It has helped render moderation and tolerance as the twin characteristics of Bangladeshi society. It has enabled us to play the constructive role that we do in the global arena.

It is no accident, therefore, that in this Council, Bangladesh was so closely associated with evolution and adoption of landmark resolution 1325. It was the Bangladesh Presidency that issued the statement on 'Women and Peace', for the first time in the Council, on International Women's Day in March 2000. The thesis of that statement was that 'equal access and full participation of women in power structures, and their full involvement in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, were essential ingredients for the maintenance, and promotion, of peace and security.'

Mr. President,

On the third anniversary of Resolution 1325, we need to reflect further on how best to advance its implementation. We need to analyze as to what poses the main challenges, and how these can be overcome. There are certain practical steps that immediately come to mind. One is adequate representation of women at all levels of decision making both at pre-conflict stage and during hostilities. Also, the same apply at all points of peace keeping, peace-building, reconciliation and reconstruction. The other is the need to continue to maintain sustained

commitment at all times to gender-justice and women's empowerment. Ensuring protection from and zero tolerance to war crimes committed against women are of paramount importance. Greater representation of women in Peace-keeping operations and as special representative to the Secretary General should make profound impacts in enhancing gender sensitivity at all stages of Peace Mission. While numbers are important, it is equally significant that issues pertaining to gender must be mainstreamed and integrated, so that outcomes benefit women.

This empowerment must be effected both politically and economically. Your delegation, Mr. President, has initiated a resolution on "Women and Political Participation" at the Third Committee this year. We commend you on this. Bangladesh has co-sponsored it because we deeply believe in its contents.

Mr. President,

Once the peace-process is set in motion, women's groups and networks can be energized to work together with the UN system to educate and raise awareness with regard to human rights and rule of law in areas of conflict. Their adequate participation in peace negotiations will help them focus on the special difficulties that women confront at such times.

It is during the stages of peace-building and reconstruction that women can make even a greater contribution. Recently the Second Committee, which our Ambassador has the privilege of chairing this year, organized a panel discussion on "Women's empowerment, Micro-credit, and poverty eradication. Simple innovative ideas like micro-credit and non-formal education to women in post-conflict societies can render a yeoman's service towards positive societal transformations. A politically and economically empowered woman, who is also educated, can form the back-bone of any, indeed all post-conflict societies.

In many places devastated by conflict --Kosovo, Timor Leste, Afghanistan and others - micro-credit has proven to have a stabilizing effect on local economies.

Immediate access of financial resources to the most disadvantaged, such as war widows and other female heads-of-households provided employment, generated income, improved food security for the family unit, and jump-started the economic development process.

Mr. President,

Bangladesh's experience in empowering rural women through micro-credit and education, is well known. Our investment in women has contributed to the values of pluralism, democracy, and human rights. These, we believe, are the ideals that provide the matrix for sustainable peace. We are prepared to share these with the world, particularly with societies of comparable milieu. Bangladesh's vibrant civil society organizations work to spread these values in Africa, Afghanistan and Timor-Leste. Our peacekeepers, one of the largest in UN Peacekeeping, carry these ideals with them, aiming to impart them to peoples in distant parts.

The UN system, particularly the Security Council, can collate these experiences and practices, examine and study them and transmit them in an institutionalized fashion. These may contribute to move us forward from advocacy to implementation, from thought to action, from hope to fruition.

I thank you, Mr. President.