

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
October 28 2011, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E. Mr. Momen, Representative of Bangladesh

I thank the presidency of Nigeria for organizing this important event. I also commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Under-Secretary-General Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and other speakers on women and peace and security on their insightful statements.

Eleven years ago, the Security Council adopted the landmark resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. Bangladesh, a member of the Council at that time and one of the core sponsors of the resolution, was closely associated with the adoption of that historic document, which endeavours to ensure women's rights and roles in peace and security. The decisions adopted in the document apply not only to States, but also to actors involved in the post-conflict peace process. We take a modicum of pride in what we did a decade ago.

Thereafter, several resolutions, such as resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010), have been adopted to buttress the process initiated in resolution 1325 (2000). We are, however, disappointed to note that violence against women and girls continues, as detailed in various reports. As we have mentioned in the past, women and girls suffer most as victims of conflict, while in the peace process they are mostly deprived of the dividends. Therefore, the onus lies on us to ensure that the oppression of women and girls, particularly that based on gender, is stopped forever.

We are well aware that poverty, the struggle for scarce resources, and socio-economic injustice and unfairness lie at the heart of conflicts, and that all of them sadly create breeding grounds for social blights, including violence against women and girls. The resulting impact not only leads to insecurity for women and girls, but also impairs political and economic stability, as well as national security. Therefore, protecting women's rights is not an option, but an obligation that requires coordinated action from all of us.

We recognize that empowering women will lead to their taking command of resources and acquiring adequate leadership capabilities for the efficient management of those resources. Therefore, we emphasize the fulfilment of women's economic needs and the necessity of their engagement internationally at all levels and in all forms of decision-making.

While the former could be achieved by ensuring women's access to and participation in income generating and entrepreneurial activities, such as micro-credit, education, vocational training and public health, the latter could be ensured through the recruitment of women, particularly to senior positions. In order to more clearly understand the needs of the women of the South, we must ensure that women from the global South get due recognition in the consideration of such recruitment. For proper coordination with the field, the fair representation of troop- and police-contributing countries must be ensured, as decided previously by the General Assembly and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations of the United Nations.

We believe that women's participation can be ensured through an inclusive process. At the policy level, this requires the creation of a mechanism to integrate women into decision-making processes, which should be supported by the necessary capacity building initiatives at the community level that would enable women to effectively participate. We strongly believe that our debates and discussions, instead of being confined to our respective capitals, should transcend borders and reach women at the grass-roots level, women who may sometimes be unable even to find the words to express their agony. This has to be done by empowering the people, especially women, at the grass-roots level. If we fail to do so, our progress will be slow.

In Bangladesh, through our experience of nation building and women's empowerment, we have embraced that view and developed what our Prime Minister, Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, calls a peace model. The central message of the model is to empower people, including women and vulnerable groups, by providing them with an education and helping them to build their skills, by ensuring that they exercise their right to vote and participate in governance, by raising their income level, by ending poverty and hunger and by eliminating all forms of discrimination and terrorism. In her address to the General Assembly (see A/66/PV.22), the Prime Minister of Bangladesh presented her model to the world community, as she is convinced that if peace is attained, development and prosperity will follow. We would be happy to share our experiences with interested delegates.

In Bangladesh, women occupy the top political leadership posts in the country. The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees the equality of men and women within the broad framework of non-discrimination on the grounds of religion, race or gender. The Government has adopted a national policy for women's advancement and a national plan of action. A women's development implementation committee, headed by the Minister for Women's and Children's Affairs, monitors the implementation of policies for women's empowerment. It has also introduced gender-based budgeting. The results have been highly positive. To cite just one example, the enrolment of girls in both primary and secondary level schools exceeds that of boys, helped by tuition waivers and the provision of stipends for girls in secondary schools.

The Government has enacted laws to protect women against domestic violence and is currently implementing a number of projects to develop the capabilities of women. Many affirmative actions have been taken that help women in distress and elderly women. In order to involve women in decision-making processes, the Government has adopted a quota system for women in the national Parliament and in the recruitment of our civil service officers, in addition to direct elections and open competitions.

In the maintenance of international peace and security, we take pride in our modest contribution of troops and police forces to United Nations peacekeeping missions. The recruitment of women to the police forces and the military amply demonstrates our commitment to women's empowerment in both the national and the international arenas. We are pleased that we were able to deploy a full contingent — an all female formed police unit — to the friendly country of Haiti following the devastating earthquake there. I am pleased to report that our all-male troop contingents are fully briefed on gender issues. We provide the necessary on-the-job training to reinforce their understanding and sensitivity in that regard. We are aware that we need to mainstream a gender perspective into all conflict

prevention activities and strategies, develop effective gender-sensitive early warning mechanisms and institutions and strengthen efforts to prevent violence against women, including various forms of gender-based violence.

In conclusion, I would reiterate that we in Bangladesh have been making our best efforts to ensure women's empowerment and participation in all spheres of life, as we believe that educating a boy means educating a person, while in contrast, educating a girl means educating a family. We are willing to replicate any good practices that we come across globally in our national policy and are similarly ready to share our relevant experience with others for the good of humankind.